

Unity *In* Purity

"... that they may be one, even as we are one."
(John 17:22)



Moses Ayomikun Oladipupo

INTRODUCTORY HYMN

The Church Of God Is One by Daniel W. Whittle (1840-1901)

The Church of God is one:
As brethren here we meet;
For us salvation's work is done,
In Christ we stand complete.

Chorus

*The Church of God is one,
Is one in faith and love,
Is one in the death by Jesus borne,
One in His life above.*

The Church of God is one:
One only Lord we know;
We worship Jesus, God's own Son,
Who came God's love to show.

Chorus

The Church of God is one:
All, sinners saved by grace;
Our plea, the precious blood alone;
The cross, our meeting place.

Chorus

The Church of God is one:
The Bible we revere;
By it all saving truth is known,
And God to man brought near.

Chorus

The Church of God is one:
One blessed hope have we;
Our dear Redeemer's sure return
His saints to glorify.

Chorus

UNITY IN PURITY

“...THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE.”
(JOHN 17:22)

UNITY IN PURITY

By

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Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, KING JAMES
BIBLE

First Published in 2018

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Publishing and graphic design by
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INTRODUCTION

It is with great joy and inexpressible gratitude to God our Saviour that I present to you my book, "UNITY IN PURITY." It has been coming for a very long while now and that is why I'm the more overjoyed about its successful completion and publishing AT LAST. Wow! I give glory and thanks to God for his immense assistance and inspiration to overcome all the things that caused the delay.

It is facetiously noteworthy that I'm very grateful to all our false teachers for the heresies they teach. They were of immense importance to the success of this book. Who said God can't make good use of bad things? Anytime I go to church, attend meetings, overhear sermons on the tele, etc., and hear the venom they keep spitting out as doctrines, it energises me to go back to my book and continue my writings in the bid to correct the damaging effects of their teachings. Much of the energy by which I overcame my laziness and reluctance came from the anger I felt at the prevalent heretical sermons preached and divisions caused by false teachers today. (But don't be scared, it is not a book of rants). So a very warm thank you to all our false teachers. Cheers.

That said, I was inspired to meditate on matters of the unity of the Church of Christ, about almost a decade ago, when I listened to a sermon by A.W. Tozer. In that sermon he spoke on the importance of unity and it made me to start looking at the church with the knowledge of the importance of our unity in my mind. My meditations, contemplations, and observations on these things is what inspired me to write this book.

While I wished to talk about the importance of unity, I feared that people may be mistaken to think that by unity I mean we should ignore our differences in the bid to unite, for when people talk about unity today, this is often how they think unity can be achieved. However, when it comes to Christian unity, ignorance is not bliss but total disaster. Pretending to be ignorant about our differences is not the form of unity we see in scriptures.

For this reason, I had to choose the title "UNITY IN PURITY" to be clear on the point I'm presenting in this book. By this I wished to show from the very title that we should be united not by being indifferent, but that rather we should be united by being of one mind. It is not the stupid unity of dogs, swines, goats, ravens, etc. fellowshiping with sheep while pretending that they're all the same. That is unity in impurity. Unity in Purity however is not being different in our minds and ignoring those differences, but being united in the true unity of the Word of God, for there's no ground of Christian unity except in the purity of the word of God.

It would be a bit of a wishful thinking to assume that, under the all round pressure of the endless wiles of the enemy, the church can attain to anything near unity without a prayerful, conscious, and wise effort for it. A. B. Simpson, in his book, "Wholly Sanctified" said, "the chain is never stronger than its weakest link." This is so true about our unity. We must be strong in all areas that make for our unity and not ignore any. The strength in the strong links is always nullified by the weakness of the weak link, and sadly this can't be vice versa, for the weak link does not assume the strength of the strong links. So our unity can not be wholly strong unless we are strong in all areas. The essence of this book is to help in this effort, that we may strive consciously, wisely, and prayerfully to attain to a state of unity.

As I wrote the book it was becoming too voluminous because talking about our unity cuts across every single aspect of Christian life and doctrine. For this reason, keeping my points in an orderly and logical flow started becoming very tedious to do. So I had to segment it into sections and took away many parts of the book that could be discussed as a part of another book with a different but similar subject. By the grace of God, I'll try to bring the books I drew out of this to a speedy completion and publish them as soon as possible.

This decision is behind why the book is in 5 sections. In the first section I seek to present briefly the nature, detrimental effects of our division, and

how this division we can observe in the church is at complete variance with God's desire for the church. In the second, I seek to present briefly the differences between the false unity being paraded everywhere as unity and the true unity we see in scriptures. Our understanding of the true unity God expects from us is key to the success of our pursuit of true unity. In the third section, I seek to present to us briefly the benefits of being united. In the forth section, being the dominant section, as this is the major essence of the book, I seek to explain elaborately how to attain scriptural unity and how to maintain it. And in conclusion, I bring everything to a brief summary and present the assurance we find in scriptures about the guaranteed success in striving for our unity.

I pray that as you read this book, God would both make you understand the importance he places on our unity and be spurred to pursue this unity in every way possible. God bless you.

Ayomikun.

Section 1

Understanding Our Position In Relation To The Will Of God

THE CHURCH REMAINS UNITED - THE WORLD DIVIDED

*"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."
(2 Timothy 2:19)*

*"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."
(John 10:27)*

The hymn writer who wrote "Onward Christian Soldiers," wrote in the second verse as follows:

*"Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod;
We are not divided,
All one body we:
One in hope and doctrine,
One in charity."*

Despite all the apparent division, he was not a deluded man. He knew what he meant. The true church of Christ remains united. The Lord knows his own. Those who Christ knows are his stands united through all ages. They are united in him and in the purity of his word, and love one another truly. The Lord said "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27). Those who the Lord knows are quite different from those which the world sees or knows. Those who the Lord knows stands

united come what may, because they follow Christ their head. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). If these follow Christ thus walking together, it is only because they are not divided but agreed, they are united in purpose, they are all one body, they are united in hope, they are united in doctrine, they are united in charity, they are united in the purity of the word of God.

In the creed that goes, "I believe in the communion of saints..." we understand that we are united beyond what the world could imagine. The communion of saints means that we all as saints have all things in common. All things except the insignificant ones like the food we like best, the colour of our skin and so on. We are not only united as Christians standing on the surface of the earth in this present time, but we are united with the saints gone on before. We are united with as many as have believed in Jesus Christ in truth down the ages. We are united with God our head. But though this unity is not visible to the world, God knows those who are his.

Those who the world observe to make up the church cannot be perfectly united as we. This is because while the church remains united in such blessed unity, the world remains divided. The world is so divided with a confused division that many even find themselves in the midst of the church while not belonging in any way to her. The world in this church buildings are divided against the world in the other church building, and they both are united against other fragments of the world which don't associate with anything called church. This division even makes some of the people of the world ascend to the peak of Christian leadership. It is the observation of the world in church buildings that makes it seem as if the church is divided but the church is united with such a bond that the Devil cannot find a penetration space to divide as a result of the living Spirit of God existing so richly in the life of every saint.

A saint beholding another saint is such a delight. You just love him because of the mutual passion for God. As you frown against moral decadence, so

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does he, as you love to pray, so does he, as you love to sing hymns of praise to the Most High, so does he. He may not worship in the same church building with you, but you have the same hope both for things present and things to come. In the midst of such there is no division.

It is in the midst of those worldly men and women, who are evil hypocrites, deluded fools, greedy heretics, who don't pursue after righteousness nor see the need to do so, who refuse to join their counterparts in night clubs, brothels, beer parlour, etc. that you find division and fighting. Sadly, men who are interested in the money they have would seek to make these comfortable in the church. When you preach righteousness they wrestle your words and say that is archaic. When you speak of devotion, they classify you a fool who has no idea of the amount of things there are in the world to enjoy. When you speak of outright obedience to God which is without questioning, they say that you are mad for choosing what is so unpopular. But these still think they are part of the church of Christ, and the rest of the world being so deceived think they're one of us. For this reason, the church seem divided.

It is not new that such people should exist within the church. Samuel Rutherford once wrote in his letter, “the church knoweth Him [Christ] by His voice, and can discern His tongue amongst a thousand. I say this to the end ye should not love those dumb masks of antichristian ceremonies, that the church where ye are for a time hath cast over the Christ whom your soul loveth.” It was grievous to behold in his days too. The church has never been free from such. I don't anticipate that it will ever be. But we must always, I mean always, contend for this most holy faith of ours. We mustn't give in to the heretics but must always make sure that in the midst of heresy, whether prevailing or dying, the banner of truth is held high enough for the willing to follow and be saved.

I speak a lot against such people who don't belong to the church but find a place for themselves amidst the fold. I sometimes speak with hurtful sarcasm, poking fun at their misinterpretations of scriptures, and I'm not

grieved that I do. When the world observes that one Christian is speaking against another and condemning his stance on scriptures, one may think that this gives the church an image that it is divided. Though it may, the church is not still divided. What is observed as division in the church is only illusively so.

Let us say, there is a country called Peaseland. The Peaselandish people are very united and live in peace. If there is an invasion, there is sure to be fightings within the territory of Peaseland, but it does not mean that Peaseland is divided. Peaseland remains united against its foes though they be within. It is the same with the church. That there are fightings does not mean that the church is divided, but because the world is attempting to invade the church, there are fightings within. Sometimes the fight is between two devils fighting for self interests, and other times it is the saints fighting the devil out of their midst. The church must remain in this state of constant fighting till doctrines become purer, fellowship sweeter, brotherhood more cordial, our identity more refined, the Holy Spirit happier, and the spirit of every saint completely and comprehensively revived. This warfare must every true believer partake in, as many as indeed love Jesus and his church. And while the church engages in this raging warfare against invasion, I say, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." (Amos 6:1).

It is because of the catastrophic division in the world that we must address the issue of unity so that we can stand closely together that there be no space for the world in the church. In my book titled, *THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF SACRIFICE*, I explained that we are undergoing a severe identity crisis. I sought to address the issue as much as I could in that book. I recommend it to every reader to know what to work by in addressing this crisis. Ability to define our identity would be very instrumental to the success of our strife for unity. We are in the world but not of the world and that should be apparent in our identity. The world should not be amidst us nor in us.

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While it is true that our unity is beyond what can be broken, whether the world likes it or not, what we appear to the world is very important. First, it is by love manifesting itself in our unity that the world may know that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ and may come to him and be saved (John 13:34-35). Souls would be lost if we allow the world come into our midst to cloud the beauty of God's unity in us. Secondly, when men see us united they would glorify the Father because of our unity. We have many assignments to fulfill in this world. There's no better and more effective way to fulfill them than by being united.

So while the church remains eternally united we have a job to do to ensure that this unity is very apparent to the world. If we have no reason, let us strive for unity because of the noble name of Christ we bear. May God give us the grace to do so in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, it is cheering to see that we your children have a unity that can't be broken. But Lord, the division in the world is so great that it is hiding our unity. Give us power, courage, and zeal to expel the world out of our midst to make our unity more pronounced. Intervene in our identity crisis that our fellowship may be purer in the purity of your word in Jesus' name. Amen.*

THE NATURE OF THE ILLUSIVE DIVISION IN THE CHURCH

"Is Christ divided?"
(1 Corinthians 1:13)

Having seen that the division in the church is only illusively so, it would be helpful to see also the nature of this illusive division. Though it is only illusive, it has its grave adverse effects on the church, the gospel, the name of Christ, and the effectiveness of our witnessing to the world. Anything that touches these things if of grave consequences. For this reason, while we must console ourselves that the church is ever united, we must not ignore the damaging effects of the illusive division. We mustn't fold our hands and do nothing, we must address it effectively. For this reason, I wish to speak briefly on both the causes and effects of the illusive division.

Causes Of Division

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."
(1 John 2:19)

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"
(James 4:1)

James tells us concisely that the reason for division in the church is lust. Love for the things of this world is at the root of church division. The church of today is an avenue for profit making. If you wish to make much profit, you better start your own church. The church is an avenue to be

worshiped, so if you wish to be worshiped, go open your own church and you'd be a demigod to your members. If you wish to have worldly recognition, go open your own church, then they'd call you the founder of this or that church. If you want the things that appeal to the flesh, go open your own church. And in opening your church you divide the body of Christ. People lust after money, they love to be worshiped, they want fame and worldly recognition, they have the love of the world and so they open their own church and divide the body of Christ. And since we are told that the love of this world is enmity with God, we know that most churches are founded as institutions started usually unwittingly with the sole purpose of warring against God and his purpose.

If these profits were to be removed, there'd be far less reasons for the church to be divided. The people who divide the church in this present times are the worldly men who've sneaked their way by much hypocrisy to become the clergymen of the church. They divide the church in the bid to secure their selfish interests and cause the body of Christ to suffer loss. I have met many true Christians from different denominations. We interact well. We could be a group of a number of friends, each from a different denomination, but we all had the same hope, the same belief, the same expectation, and we were in many ways the same. So why are there still many church denominations? It is because, they who should have known better (i.e. considering what they claim to be), insist on dividing the church. Even when they see that there is no difference in their own belief and that of the next church, they just won't unite. When they don't see any reason to be different and be separate from the other church, they'd just create a difference in something as insignificant as marriage procedure, and make that an issue enough to claim to be different from the other churches and not worship with them. It is not the glory of Christ that these men go after but their gain.

Jeremiah 10:21, "For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered." When leaders forsake the Lord to run after the things of this

world, division is inevitable. This, as a matter of fact, is from God himself. It is glaring that leaders of the present day don't seek the Lord, else our ways should not have been so diametrically opposed to scriptures. They seek after the things of this world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. So they are not prospering. They are a bunch of failures. Spiritually dead people leading other spiritually dead people destined for spiritual deadness, and if they don't repent, the second spiritual death.

Another major source and sustainer of division in the church is our acceptance of varying scriptures in the name of Bible translations. The varying Bible translations we use so mildly and gently yet wickedly divides us. It so mild and gentle that you can hardly trace our division back to it. I spoke on the menace of varying Bible translations in my book titled "THE WORD OF GOD," but the knowledge I now know proves to me that there are even things more sinister about our modern Bible translations than I understood at the time of publishing that book. Let me emphasise here that if the church must be united, then we must of necessity throw away all our modern Bible translations and stick to the King James Bible alone. I shall explain better in a later chapter.

Ecclesiastes 3:16 says, "And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." When this becomes true of the church, unity becomes impossible. When in the place where we ought to have righteousness, we have iniquity, how could we have peace. When sin is allowed to be practiced so freely amidst people of the church. In the place of judgment too, which ought to exist among leaders, we have wickedness. The wickedness of infighting, hypocrisy, extortion, lust after benefits from filthy lucre, and what have you. These things can't be and there be unity simultaneously. Compromise and the love of sin has caused much division in our midst. Because for unity to exist, there must be a binding factor. This factor is the Bible. Once we turn aside from it in sin and compromise, we have broken the cord of unity.

1 Corinthians 3:4 says, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" Leaders today enjoy what Paul condemned. They keep quiet (because they obviously love it) when men heap praise on them. They think this will make them approved before men. They ought to condemn such praises like Paul did. First because it is profitless to them and injurious to our unity, secondly, it is foolish to praise men seeing we have so little knowledge about everything. On what account then do people praise people they know nothing about. Only God's commendation is anything, the praise people heap on leaders is vanity. I shall talk more about leadership and praise in another book.

Let it be clear that it is for profit's sake as well as because of sin and compromise, the church is being broken into bits and pieces. Once you see a divided church, just know of a surety that the genuine love of God is absent and the wicked love of this world, pride of life, and the lust of the flesh is what is at work. These are the causes and sustaining factors of church division.

The Effects Of Division In The Church

*"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."
(Matthew 12:25)*

The effects of division can not be exhausted or over emphasised. The church being divided results in a mockery. The observing world has an occasion to mock because, if we are Christians proving each other wrong, what truth is there in our midst? I've once preached to a Muslim who asked me, "now if I become a Christian, which denomination do I join?" He

wasn't willing to become a Christian, he was just poking fun at the church. Whether or not he should be mocking or if his mockery was justified is not the issue. The issue however is that he had the occasion to do so. God is never happy with anyone who gives the adversary an occasion to mock him.

Apart from this, it makes me more unhappy when comedians poke fun at the church and they are right because of the doleful state we have arrived at due to carelessness and nonchalance. I once heard a comedian say to an amused crowd that he could mention a church each with initials of all the Alphabets starting from "A" to "Z." His audience wondered how that were possible. They knew that there were many churches quite alright, but not enough to list them alphabetically without skipping a letter. Starting from "A" he mentioned churches down to "Z." That reveals a lot. It reveals that the church is as divided as warring parties. If due to constraint of mentioning just a church for each letter, how much more churches will he list if he had no constraints and go on to mention all the churches there were for each letter. Though it was sad that he poked fun at the church, it was even sadder that he was right. If they make mockery of the church saying things that are untrue, we could just ignore them while they make a fool of themselves, but when they make mockery of the church pointing out things that appear true, that indeed brings shame to us.

The illusive division we are experiencing also results in waste of money and resources that could have been used to propagate the gospel. I've been in parts of Nigeria where you'd see churches lined up and scattered about in the same location and I once worshiped with one of these churches. In this church where I worshiped, they had no public address system and needed one. To be able to afford it, they started pressing hard on members (mostly students and low income earners) to donate from week to week and day to day, as often as they met. But in the next church, they were blasting songs away and their voices could be heard far away because they had a functioning public address system. This public address system could have served all these churches lined and scattered about. But, because of

division, all these churches must get its own public address system. This is just one example of gross waste of resources amidst the many realities we're faced with. No kingdom can survive which imbibes a culture of waste.

Division also causes rivalry. This form of rivalry also results in unreasonable waste of resources. I've heard many times when church leaders would push their members to give through their noses to build a structure the other church denomination has built. If one church has built a magnificent structure, all the other churches want to build it too so as not to feel inferior to the other. If there were no division, if it were anything, it would have been sufficient that such a structure belongs to the body of Christ. Things such as structures are not important and don't credit the body of Christ. What credits the body of Christ are deeds worthy of his glorious name. There are other ways in which rivalry shows up, for example, membership, quality of song ministration, preaching eloquence, and so on and so forth. And these things are harmful to both our growth, well being, and reputation.

Now, every denomination has its own peculiar belief, and what this puts in place is that there is now a system of which doctrinal boundaries are set, enabling the clergy to play the dirty politics of doctrine. They'd be ever scheming how to win members from one church to the other. The so called missions, evangelism, etc. are all tools to engage in the political warfare of doctrines. Every preacher says he is called. Here in Abuja we have so much churches, but someone would say he has the passion to work in "God's vineyard," and would go get himself a degree in theology and open himself a church in Abuja while there are rural areas all about with no churches. But they'd keep starting new church here and there, in every corner only seeking to win people from other churches to themselves rather than reach out to the lost and dying. They by consistent pretense, keep dividing the church into bits and pieces.

Division also causes weakness for us. In the rise of moral decadance and

corruption sweeping the world, there's no better entity to resist this wave of corruption than the church, but seeing how divided the church is we are nothing to reckon with in challenging these vices. In challenging the evil of same sex marriage, for example, people found it safer and surer to resist the evil by appealing to traditions of men than appealing to the church or the Bible. The force we ought to have by speaking with a voice is lost. The Bible which should be our final authority and thus the most forceful authority to appeal to is also without force because the very Christians who claim to believe in it don't obey it. We have become so weak and powerless. There seem to be victories here and there, but they are usually based on individual efforts. We are fighting a confused battle where a single statement from a united church would have set a lot of things to rest. I believe that all the forces in the world cannot stand one united church. But we have a lot to do in amending our ways and getting back this power before which all other powers bow. This can only be done by ensuring we unite in the purity of the word of God.

The damage that division causes to Christendom cannot be over emphasised. Let us, with full purpose of mind, resolve to play our part in uniting the church. United we stand, divided we fall. It is for this purpose I write this book that we may see the things required of us to be united and the benefits of being united. It is my sincere prayer that this book will spur us to prayer and action, both collectively and individually, to push for a church with a conspicuous unity.

Prayer: *Dear Father, I see that the division we observe in the church, though it were merely illusive, has such a damaging effect on all you've called us to be and to do. Please forgive us that we've allowed ourselves slip into such a shameful state. Save us from this doleful state and help us stand in the unity of your purity to the glory of your wondrous name. In Jesus' name have I prayed. Amen.*

THE DESIRE OF THE LORD FOR HIS CHURCH

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

(John 17:11)

In all that we do, if indeed we call Jesus Lord, we ought to pay close attention to his desires about each and everything that comes to our mind. We must first of all earnestly seek to know his will, and once we know it, we must also earnestly pursue its fulfilment. When we think about the world, we ought to earnestly seek to know what the desire of Jesus is for the world and go after fulfilling this desire of his. If we think about little children, we ought to earnestly seek to know what the desire of Jesus is for little children and go after fulfilling this desire of his. If we look at our nations and states, we ought to earnestly seek to know what the desire of Jesus is for our nations and states and go after fulfilling this desire of his for our nations and states. This applies to every single thing we could think of or conceive in our minds. We must seek and do his will for this is how we can say indeed he is our Lord.

If we should think of the desire of the Lord Jesus about everything including minor things, how much more should we consider his desire when we think of his very own church of which he is the head? We ought to much more earnestly consider carefully what his desire for his church is and seek to fulfill his desire with all our strength. From his prayer in John 17, we could see clearly his heart's desire for his church in these words, "that they may be one, as we are." From that verse alone we can see that the unity of his body is his heartfelt desire. Dare anyone who calls himself by the noble name of Jesus act in any way that divides his church? If he truly is our Lord we must carefully consider his desire for his church and make that our goal.

Three Earnest Desires Of Our Lord

1. Unity with ourselves: *"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."* **(John 17:11)** Jesus wants us to be united and as his manner was, he also gave an example of how he wants us to be united. He said, "as we are One." So he speaks here of a perfect oneness just the way he and the Father are in perfect unity and are indeed one and the same. In verse 21 we hear him praying that this unity does not entail the disciples only but everybody who would come to believe in him through their word. This means he wants us of the 21st Century to be united with his disciples and with Christians of every other century.

2. Unity With The Godhead: *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word; That they may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."* **(John 17:20-21).** Here we understand that Christ does not just wish that we be united with one another of every age, dispensation, and time, he also wants us to be united with the Godhead. By this he wants us to be in full agreement with the Godhead and so share in his glory as we can see in verse 22. We can also see that without our unity the world is less likely to believe in him, and without believing in him the world cannot be saved. So our disunity is driving men away from Jesus and consequently driving them to hell. So much was passionately said here in prayer for our unity both with ourselves and the Godhead, but how lightly has the church taken the matter of unity.

3. Preservation In Purity: *"And now I am no more in the world, but these*

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are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are... I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (**John 17:11,15**). Here Jesus makes us understand that the unity he refers to is a unity in purity and this is very important to note as we go on in this book. We can come to this conclusion when he says in verse 11 "that they may be one, as we are," for we know most truly that there oneness is in absolute purity. However Jesus prays specifically and categorically for the purity in the unity of his church in verse 15 praying to the Father that we should be kept from evil though we be in the world. Therefore our unity is to exclude the world. We can't be united with the world in her ways that is always against God. We must not for any reason conform to the standard of this world though we be in this world. His words in verse 17 goes further to speak of the purity of our unity where he prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." He goes further in verse 19 to pray, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." So we must be united in Sanctification. For this reason, we know that unity in purity excludes the world and all that is in the world. It is a unity in purity springing out of the truth, guided by the truth, and maintained by the truth. When he says, "keep them from the evil..." he meant that we should be preserved in this purity.

Apart from what we see in John 17, we can read in Ephesians 4:10-13 where it says, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Here we see that it is Jesus Paul spoke of here seeing it started with these words, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens." And it is Jesus that gave gifts of apostleship, prophets, etc. and we are told all this is for the

purpose of edifying his church. And the first aim of this edification that he gives is expressed in this words, "Till we all come to the unity of the faith..." So we understand that Christ is bent on unifying his church. All these gifts he sends is to have one united church. That it expressed it this way, "unity of the faith..." informs us that unity is an integral part of the faith. Failure to use our gifts to unify the church is to frustrate those gifts. Furthermore, when pastors go start their own churches claiming they have a gift, it is either that gift is a lie or counterfeit, or it is being abused and misused. It is like arming soldiers to defend the sovereignty of nation who end up using it for atrocities against their own citizens.

Seeing Christ our head is keen on having a united church, is there anyone who dares to have himself called by his noble name not be also keen on uniting his church? For this reason, seeing that Christian means Christ-like, a divided Christianity is no Christianity. A divided church is church not presided over by Christ, for the body of Christ is not broken.

In the passage we're considering, Jesus prayed for other things such as joy (John 17:13), indwelling divine love (John 17:26), and other things, but it is very easy to see that the unity of his church was paramount in his prayers. If he placed such a high priority on his church's unity, we too (as many as love the Lord) should spend all our strength to do likewise. As many as love him must seek to see the Christian brotherhood united with one another, with the Godhead, and be preserved in this blessed unity. He would not only seek to pursue this unity casually, but he would with all his strength seek to achieve this unity for the sake of our dear Lord. This book is written to help such people who love our Lord to be able to unite his church in the way he wants it united.

As we proceed in this book, let us keep in mind the earnestness with which Christ desires his church to be united. Let us keep in mind the imensity of what he has invested in ensuring that he has a united church. Are we going to throw our weight behind those who seek to frustrate his effort or are we going to seek to unite his church by any means we can. This will enable us

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to see the gravity of the laxity we have towards the unity of the church. The laxity under which the church is falling into bits and pieces. This will also help us rise up with all earnestness to unite the church of Christ and take to arms against every force that divides the church.

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, we see that indeed your earnest desire is that your church be united in purity as you are united with the Father in all holiness. Teach us and help us to be united with ourselves, with you and the Father, and help us to be preserved in this unity. Give us the grace to do our parts in earnestly pursuing your desire for your church. This I ask in your dear name. Amen.*

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIVIDING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."
(Luke 11:23)

Those dividing the church should be warned against dividing the church. It should also make us to be very cautious about our actions. We must weigh each and everyone of our actions to make sure that they are not pulling the church apart. Even though we mean well, we must be careful that what good we desire to do does not end up being bad. There are dire consequences to dividing the Church. It is for this reason I wish to call our attention to the things we find in scriptures written against those who divide the church.

There're three ways to respond to a threat and harm inflicted on someone. The way a person chooses to respond tells us a lot about the strength of that person and the dire consequences of harming that person. These three ways are, to flee from the threat or harm, to threaten back, to remain calm and quiet about the threat or harm. He who flees away is weak and can't do anything, he who threatens back may be strong and may be even weaker than he who flees. Threatening back is often just a way of keeping foes away and not often a show of strength. But he who you offend but remains calm and doesn't threaten neither flees away, I tell you, fear that man.

When Jesus only says, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (Matthew 12:30). He doesn't tell you what he'll do, but only informs you quite plainly that by refusing to gather with him, you scatter abroad. He makes no threat neither does he

show any sign of feeling threatened. Such a statement ought to be feared. This is a very strong warning of the dire consequences of scattering his church whether you meant well or not. So we ought to be careful and make sure that we are actively gathering with him by each and everyone of our actions and decisions. There's no middle ground of indifference for any of our actions or decisions. They are either pulling apart or gathering together his church.

I listened to the sermon of A.W. Tozer in which he sought to answer what it means to accept Christ. The title of the sermon is "What Does It Mean To Accept Christ." In that powerful sermon, he pointed out to the fact that there's no middle ground about accepting Christ. He said not accepting him is also outright rejection of him. He gave an example of the World Wars. He said in the wars everything took sides. Nations took sides, nature too took sides. He said the only thing that didn't take sides were the stars above. This he said because in such wars armies were bound to take advantage of every circumstance they find themselves. If fighting while it rained was advantageous to their operation, it means the rain took sides with them. If fighting while it was sunny was advantageous to the operation of an army, the sun took sides with them. These forces of nature didn't have the ability to take sides, but they took sides all the same. Only the stars above, according to him, seemed to lack the ability to take sides. Tozer explained that it is the same with accepting Christ.

I say here then that by extension this is the same case with the church. You are either gathering or scattering, weakening or strengthening. Every little decision, actions, and even inactions counts a great deal. For example, when you see people dividing the church for gain and you just sit there wanting to do nothing, though like nature you don't have the mind to scatter his church or take sides with them who do, you take sides all the same with his enemies who're scattering his church. For this reason, it is important that we be careful about every action we take and decision we make.

Christ is quiet about issuing threats against those scattering his church, but thankfully we can get some scriptural warning from the mouth of the prophet Isaiah and Jeremiah, to mention just two. We also get a warning from Paul which we could see in the light of scattering the church of Christ too. I'll speak on these warnings briefly before moving on to the next chapter.

Isaiah 45:9 says, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" To divide the church is to strive against Christ who prayed "Lord make them one as we are one..." It is to strive against Christ who also gave many gifts with the principal purpose of uniting his church (Ephesians 4:10-13). As we saw in the previous chapter of his passion for the unity of his church, we should know that dividing his church for any reason is a strong opposition to him. And what does Isaiah tell us about such a person? He first says "woe unto him..." He also goes on to speak of how foolish it is to strive with one's own maker. Jesus being God is our maker and the maker of all things that was, that are, and that shall be. "Woe" explains enough of the evil that shall befall as many as resist Jesus Christ in his quest and passion for a united church.

Next Jeremiah 23:1-3 says, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase." Here too, Jeremiah starts with "woe be unto the pastors..." The reason for this is because they scatter the sheep of his pasture. This is very much the case today. Pastors have divided the sheep amongst themselves in their denominational territories. They have driven away those who truly sought for God for who can stand the grievous

heresy they preach in order to make money. Many dear brethren have been forced to leave the church and wondering from place to place without a shepherd of a fold to identify with. The Lord says he will visit the pastors with the evil of their doings. They probably don't know that the things they do are evil and detestable before God. This warning goes to everyone who divides his church knowingly or unknowingly.

Lastly, let's see what Paul has to say on this matter. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Corinthians 3:17). It is true that our hearts are the temple of God, but I believe that it is the church that Paul refers to for he says, "... which temple ye are." Ye is a plural form of thou (or you). So it was referring to many people so he likely meant the church. Ye can be understood as referring to either all the members of the Corinthian church collectively (meaning he refers to the church), or all the members of the Corinthian church individually (meaning he refers to their body as individuals). I seem to be more convinced he spoke of the church when I read some verses before this. He was speaking of the church before this statement we're considering for he spoke of building which most definitely refers to the church and not their bodies. In saying "If any man defile..." he most likely referred to the division that was beginning to spring up which he made reference to in verses 3 and 4. So this statement is quite clearly pointed to the act of dividing the church. And the consequence of this he expresses saying, "... him shall God destroy." In other words it means, "if any man divides the body of Christ, him shall God destroy." Destruction from God awaits as many as divide the body of Christ. It may come swiftly, it may come slowly, it all depends on God's own choosing, but it shall surely come in due time. Let's be warned.

The most common way well meaning Christians take sides with those who divide the church is by silence and indifference. This I earnestly wish to plead that we cease from it. Let us be more outspoken against divisive elements in our midst. Let us not by our silence and indifference unwittingly continue to show support for them. Let us be bold and be

strong in rising up against the evil of the present time.

I speak to those who are willing to gather the church of Christ so that they can be careful and ensure that they don't, in seeking that which is good, tear his church apart. I know and I'm confident that there're many who deliberately tear his church apart. Let them continue. I do not expect them to repent and take this warnings. The they're worthy of the judgments to come so they need not repent. But to as many as love the Lord, let us be cautious to ensure that our actions are not dividing the church but gathering his church. May God help us in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I see how passionate you're about your church's unity. Please help that on no account should I find myself working against that blessed unity. Keep me from sinning against your church whether knowingly or unknowingly. As for those who delight in dividing your church, I pray that you confuse and divide their tongues and bring an end to their schemes. This I pray in your dear name's sake. Amen.*

A WARNING TO THE WORLD IN THE CHURCH

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

(Matthew 13:41 - 42)

Briefly before we go on in our study, I'd like to sound a warning to the world that find themselves in our midsts. Jesus says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Jesus is the way and there's no other way. The church is not the way, we only point to the way. We are to Jesus Christ (the way) what a signpost is to the direction to a desired location. We only point you to Jesus.

Don't be deceived, fellowshiping with those who are on their heaven bound journey is by no means the way to get to heaven. If you fellowship with the brotherhood of Christ and fail to seek to know Christ, serve him, and obey his commands in doing all he has command, hell shall be your portion at last. I pray that that won't be your portion, but you need to change your ways else there's no way to avert that.

It were better not to know the grace of God than to go to Hell under the means of grace. John Newton (1725-1807) expressed it so perfectly sublime in his hymn which goes.

*"Though in the outward church below
The wheat and tares together grow;
Jesus ere long will weed the crop,
And pluck the tares, in anger, up."*

*"Will it relieve their horrors there,
To recollect their stations here?
How much they heard, how much they knew,
How long amongst the wheat they grew!*

*"O! this will aggravate their case!
They perished under means of grace;
To them the word of life and faith,
Became an instrument of death.*

*"We seem alike when thus we meet,
Strangers might think we all are wheat;
But to the Lord's all-searching eyes,
Each heart appears without disguise.*

*"The tares are spared for various ends,
Some, for the sake of praying friends;
Others, the Lord, against their will,
Employs His counsels to fulfill.*

*"But though they grow so tall and strong,
His plan will not require them long;
In harvest, when He saves His own,
The tares shall into hell be thrown."*

So you see that you may dwell with the wheat all you want, but if Jesus does not save you, the end shall be hell. That was what the parable in Matthew 13:37-42 was all about. The wheat and tares could grow together, but a key characteristic of the judgment of God at the last day shall be separation. Separation of wheat from the tares (Matthew 13:37-42), separation of sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32-46), and many other parts of scriptures that tells us of this great day of eternal separation. Some to life and glory, and some to death and shame.

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May God help us to make it to heaven at last rather than go to hell at last under the very means of grace in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, be merciful to us and help us not to despise your grace. Help us to saved indeed. As for the world in our midst, help them to realise that it is only by your saving power that we can get to heaven and not be fellowshiping a church or the other. Please help them make the right decision to follow and by so doing be united to you and yours. In your dear name I pray. Amen.*

Section 2

Understanding The Difference Between False And True Unity

FALSE AND TRUE UNITY

*"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."
(1 Timothy 6:20)*

Having seen that unity is of paramount importance to Jesus our Lord, it is very easy to take things that in no way mean unity to mean unity and vice versa. In this section I'd be looking at the things that people often misunderstand to mean unity and point us to true unity.

In 1 Timothy 6:20, Paul admonishes Timothy to avoid vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called. He meant to say things called science that oppose the truth are falsely called science for true science must of necessity prove God's word. Just as science which is good has its false version, so does unity. We must be very sensitive and not allow ourselves to settle for any form of false unity.

It is for this reason that I wish to take time to differentiate some false forms of unity we find in the church of today so that we don't get deceived into settling for them. We must see how they are opposed to God's will and get rid of them in the quest to attain the perfect unity God wants for his church. The worst thing about these false unity is that they often hide the necessity for the true unity. So it is very imperative that we are able to distinguish between false unity and true unity.

We shall look at unity with God, with the fathers, and with ourselves who are with the baton. When I say we with the baton, I mean we who are here running the race on the surface of the earth. The fathers are all those who have run this race before us and ran it worthily. Unity with them as I shall explain is also very important. And Unity with God is the most important. Even if only we seek unity with God alone, we shall naturally find ourselves united in with each other.

Prayer: *Dearest Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I pray that as I go through this section to see the difference between true unity and false unity, help me to see what true unity is, so as to be able to refuse every false forms of unity the Devil has to offer. Let us have a right understanding of the unity you desire for us that we may not settle for less. Thank you dear Father. In Jesus' dear name I ask it. Amen.*

INTERDENOMINATIONALISM VS UNIVERSAL UNITY

*"Is Christ divided?"
(1 Corinthians 1:13)*

"So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents." (1 Kings 12:16)

Today we see that the only form of unity that poses itself as universal unity of the church is interdenominationalism. This schism termed unity is just like Israel and Judah. They had one God, they were one people, they had one hope, etc. (at least all these were so at the time of the break up), yet they couldn't exist as one nation. Most, if not all, the denominations we see today are just scars and cracks left by a schism like that which we see in Israel and Judah. This is far from what God wants for his church. So let us take a look at how interdenominationalism is in no way unity not to mention universal unity.

Interdenominationalism: The Height Of Self Deception

*"...if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us..."
(1 John 2:19)*

It is often thought that when we gather as Christians in a meeting not minding which denomination we belong to, it is a sign that we are still united, but that is the very height of self deception. Rather than to show that we are still united, it shows how terribly divided we are. If truly we see the need to fellowship together or do things together putting aside our

denominational differences and still go back to our individual denominations after the brevity of this meeting or activity, it only shows that we are so divided that even the fact that we know the Biblical injunction to be united, we can't help it. It shows that it is not ignorance of Biblical instructions, or ignorance of the expediency and benefits of unity that keeps us divided, but that we have allowed the divisive factor to be far stronger than the unifying factors.

Let us stop deceiving ourselves that interdenominationalism is a form of unity. It is a banner of division. It is an ensign of disunity and discord. For behind this ensign of porported unity are several other ensigns of selfish interest to which everybody would return after the brief time of holding up the ensign of interdenominationalism. Whenever they leave the ensign of interdenominationalism to return to their respective divided groups, the ensign of this purported unity of interdenominationalism is left on the ground of shame with no bearer.

People try to defend denominationalism that it doesn't matter which denomination you belong to, so far they preach Christ. But I tell you, if it doesn't matter then there should have been no need for denominational division. If there is denominational division it means that it matters a great deal and there's something really seriously wrong somewhere that can't make us unite despite all we see in the Bible about being united. So let us not also deceive ourselves that denominational division doesn't matter. It matters a whole lot. It reflects a deep spiritual sickness in our midst.

Ephesians 4:4-7 says, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, but why the many denominations? Is it not therefore glaring that there is no unity in interdenominationalism? This is most definitely not what Jesus prayed for his church. I fault all those who run

churches maintaining such schism.

1 Corinthians 12:25 also says, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." The twelfth chapter of 1st Corinthians tells us that God made the body in a way that there'd be no schism in the body. This is also how he made the body of Christ that there should be no schism. These elements that cause division can be considered as unwanted elements such as virus, etc. that must be decisively dealt with. Seeing that denominational schism in the body of Christ is not God's will, denominationalism is therefore a virus in the body of Christ and we must truly act against it. We must take this body of Christ back to his owner. Remember the Bible tells us, "with his stripes we are healed," and we shall be healed of our sicknesses when we return to him.

True Unity Without Denominational Walls

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

(Ephesians 4:4-7)

"...but God hath tempered the body together... That there should be no schism in the body..."

(1 Corinthians 12:24 - 25)

True unity is that unity in which all that call upon the name of the Lord bear his name alone. No Protestant, Pentecostals, Anglican, Baptist, and of course most definitely not Roman Catholic. We must bear one name, the blessed name of Jesus Christ, and in bearing that noble name we must live and exist accordingly. The true unity of Christ must be expressedly seen in

us, as many as profess him as Lord and Saviour. We must be of one mind. We must agree in every matter of doctrine. And in a case where opinions and differing view prove hard to reconcile in one, we must keep labouring together (together in unity and purity) to come to an agreement according to scriptures not to split over irrelevant things.

The Bible says, "For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." (1 Corinthians 12:24 - 25). Christ desires that there be no schism in his body. So we can see clearly that true unity is one that is void of denominational walls. If it is true that we are the body of Christ, we would not see the schism we're seeing today. But because evil men have crept into our midst we see these denominations springing up everywhere. For indeed the Bible says in Jeremiah 5:26, "For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men." That is why there are denominational factions everywhere. So it behoves everyone who is well acquainted with the will of the Lord to consistently push for a church that is united in purity. Whether we act or not, let us know that denominationalism is not welcome in the body of Christ.

Unity in Purity does not entail fellowshiping beyond denominations, but throwing denominations away and fellowshiping in the common mutual holiness of Christ alone. The disastrous effect of interdenominationalism is that it, as in the words of William Temple (1881 - 1944), "tends to obscure the need of real unity." Let us get rid of fake unity and let our aim be to attain to a real and universal unity in the purity of God's word. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Father, we know your unity with your dear Son is not a false unity as we can see in interdenominationalism. For this reason, help us not to settle for this false unity but throw it aside in the strive to attain the manner of unity we see in you and your Son. This I pray in Jesus' dear name. Amen.*

HYPOCRITICAL GATHERING VS ONENESS OF MIND

*"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"
(2 Corinthians 6:15)*

The Fales Unity In Hypocritical Gathering

*"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it."
(1 Corinthians 11:18)*

Another thing people tend to think is unity is mere gathering together. That is to say we gather together because we are united. This is often the claim in interdenominational meetings. So because people from different denominations gather in one place it means that they are united. This is also false.

In 1 Corinthians 11:18 we see Paul making a statement. He first says, "when ye come together in the church..." then goes on to say, "...there be divisions among you." Though they were gathered, yet there were divisions amongst them. At the least in their case the division was manifest and not hidden. It becomes very tricky to handle when though the division is there it is covered with pretended unity. That we are gathered together doesn't in any way mean that we are united.

The present pathetic church system doesn't have much by which it sends out unbelievers who don't wish to live by scriptures out of our midst. This

gives us a mixed multitude. You could therefore find Christians and cultists gather together to worship. Even if we had a vibrant church system that makes our gathering free from people not willing to live by God's own standards, still we know that unbelievers would still creep into our midst from time to time. Though a good church system (which we sadly don't have) may prevent them from influencing the weak amongst us, but they're gathered together with us all the same. Are we therefore united with cultists? Of course not. The Bible clearly says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel." (2 Corinthians 6:14 - 15). So just as the gathering of unbelievers and unrighteous with us doesn't make them united with us, so also meeting in an interdenominational gathering does not in any way make those in the gathering united.

Let us never deceive ourselves that unity is an external thing for though it has outward manifestations, scriptural unity originates from the mind. The unity Jesus desires for his church is not limited to mere gathering together but being of one mind.

The True Unity Of Being Of One Mind

*"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."
(Philippians 2:2)*

Any outward manifestation of unity without unity of mind is deception. Being of one mind is what makes us united. This is the fundamental element of Christian unity. We may laugh together, sing together, dance together, and whatever together, but if we are not of one mind, we are just

deceiving ourselves.

Paul wrote saying in Philippians 2:2, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." One mindedness." He went on to say in Philippians 3:16-17 that, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." Here we understand that being of one mind means walking by the same rule. Let what guides me in my walk with God be what guides you. Let the values I hold be the same value you hold. This we of course know must be held according to what we see in the Bible.

When we see Christians of which some say for example, it is okay for women to pray with uncovered hair while others say it is wrong for women to pray with uncovered hair, there is no oneness of mind here because one party disregards scriptures. So when Paul says let us walk by the same rule, he meant that each of us should follow the same rule as we see it in scriptures. I'll talk more about how we are to follow the same rule in the chapter titled, "THE NECESSITY OF DOGMAS TO UNITY & PURITY."

Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;" The joy of Paul and of every saint was and is unity. So is the joy of Christ and every of his saint. Here we see that being of one mind means we should strive together. This means having a common goal and a common purpose. That which I seek to achieve should not be contrary to that which you wish to achieve. We must live such regenerated lives that the Spirit of God would will in us to have a common purpose and desire which is chiefly these, that the name of God be honoured and that his will be done in earth as it is in Heaven. If we align our will and desires to the word of God, then we would be absolutely united enough to strive together having one goal, purpose, and desire.

Apart from this we cannot strive together.

1 Corinthians 1:10 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." This informs us of the need for a clear cut ordinance for the church if we must have one voice and perfect unity. This of course should be scriptural. If any can't sacrifice for the will of God to be done (the will of God is unity among his children John 17:20-21) amidst his children then how can they say they are of the fold of Christ. It is essential to have definite standards for all the body of Christ. There should be no blurring of the battle line. He who is in is in and should be known to be in and he who is out is out and should be known to be out.

2 Corinthians 13:11 says, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." We can see here also that being of one mind entails that we should be perfect, and we should live in peace. When it says we should be perfect it talks about knowledge of the word of God. Division occurs when ignorant fools try to interpret scriptures. That is why we see division everywhere. Ignorance is given such a loud voice that it scatters the sheep of Christ assunder. I have heard many stupid things people say trying to interpret scriptures and because of equally stupid way of reasoning in the hearers, they would say, "em, well that is another way to look at it..." When we have people who are so far from perfection in the knowledge of the word of God trying to interpret scriptures, disaster is imminent. And when we have people who are so far from perfection in the knowledge of the word of God trying to reason about the nonsense they're being told, disaster is confirmed.

Romans 15:5-6 "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Likemindedness is what only God can grant. We need to

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acknowledge that and ask him to make us likeminded. Apart from this, that Paul prays for it here reiterates the importance of being of one mind. We also see here that being of one mind entails glorifying God the same way. We cannot say we are of one mind when we have different modes of worship we, in our seperate groups, think is the acceptable way of worshiping God.

Next where it says we should be in peace, it means we should be in a state of which there is no strife. We must understand this very well in the right sense of it also. That would bring us to our next point of false unity of the mortuary.

Prayer: *Dear Father, help us not to deceive ourselves with outward show that mimics the outward manifestation of unity. Help us not to settle for shallow and vain outward show of unity but seek a true unity that originates from the mind. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

UNITY OF THE MORTUARY VS LIVELY UNITY

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:"
(John 12:42)

The False Unity Of The Mortuary

"...but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him..."
(John 12:42)

There's also this false unity that A.W. Tozer describes as the unity of the mortuary in which people are united because everyone is spiritually dead. Just as you never find corpses in the mortuary quarelling, in dispute, or slapping each other, so also these are so united because they are dead. It is not that in the mortuary things can't go wrong but being dead they can't respond, so there's this everlasting peace.

Just like in the mortuary, there's nothing that can trigger a dispute among corpses because they're dead. You can't slap a corpse and expect it to chide you for it. Not that there's nothing wrong with the slap, but what can the corpse do? People with this form of false unity can't perceive what is wrong or what is right. They've got no idea. They could sit right there and watch their church backslide into Hell and they just can't see the need to resist any decadence. They are not responsive to the corruption about them so they're quiet and allow peace reign in the midst of corruption. The same way, these ones are united in the presence of a whole world of wrongs but because of the fear to chide and rebuke or the fear of being rebuked everybody is quiet. This is far from the unity that Christ prayed for.

If the description of the unity Christ prayed for was described saying, "that

they may be one, even as we are one." (John 17:22), we know that the unity he prayed for is not a unity in the midst of corruption. Whether it is a corruption caused by fear or spiritual deadness. If he gave his unity with the Father as an example we know that is a holy unity void of corruption. It is not a unity that exists just for unity's sake. It is a unity that exists in perfect purity.

The Pharisees in John 12:42 who believed in Jesus maintained unity with the others who opposed him by failing to confess him. They feared what the others would say and that they might be put out of the synagogue. They also maintained this unity because of pride. The exalted position of Pharisees they had attained to which brought them much praise was hard for them to let go for we read in the next verse an explanation for their actions which goes, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:43). This is a corrupt unity.

This false unity of the mortuary is often justified by relativism which is an argument that what is right for one person could be wrong for another. People think they could easily rebuff rebukes by claiming that the person chiding them is only airing his own view and so he should hold his peace and respect their own views too. "Let every body hold his own view on the matter. Don't judge and you would not be judged." This way they maintain a nonsense unity that we can define a divided closeness. Such form of unity is one we can't find with Christ and the Father.

True Lively Unity Even In Rebuke And Disputes

"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

(Psalm 141:5)

Some people think that true unity is one that is devoid of disputes, but that is not true. That we are of one mind does not mean that there won't be times of rebuke and disputes. Being of one mind means we have one goal

and vision, which is ultimately the glory of God. In seeking to achieve this goal there would most certainly be differences in opinions and this would stir disputes. It does not mean that one party is seeking to dishonour God and the other party is seeking to honour him. Both seek to honour him and so they are still united in purpose, but the way it is done could stir dispute.

Contrary to those who hold on to the unity of the mortuary, we know that relativism has no place in Christianity. Philippians 3:16 says, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." We are to walk by the same rule. This tells us that relativism is not a scriptural argument. What is wrong by scriptural standards is wrong to all and what is right by scriptural standards is right to all. Your opinion doesn't count. In trying to determine what is right or wrong, there may be differing perception about scriptural injunctions. In such cases we don't go our separate ways holding onto our opinion, but we ought to view it under the light of scriptures so that both parties may align their views to the scriptures and thus be united in the purity of scriptures.

Now we must remember that dispute is completely different from strife. We could dispute as a result of trying to point out the way to honour God, but in strife we are only trying to prove we are better than the other. In strife we only seek to honour ourselves not God. So there can be disputes (not strife) despite the fact that we are of one mind.

Zwingli and Luther for example were two reformers in the same period in history with the same purpose of heart. They didn't know each other before but through the inspiration of scriptures they have come to have one goal and vision. They wanted a reformed church. They wanted a church which worshiped God in truth and not in the hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic church. But these two had serious disputes between themselves while yet being of one mind.

David said he loved the righteous people of the land and his psalms are full

of praises, admiration, and love of them. So he loved the righteous and we could say he was of one mind with the righteous. Both he and they had this common desire to keep God's commandments. But hear what he says, in Psalms 141:5. He says, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head..." So though they be of one mind, he still says let the righteous smite me, and let him reprove me. Smiting and reproving may seem to be things to happen amidst discordant people, but his statement (being himself a righteous man) shows that these things can be amidst people of one mind.

Jesus whole life was dedicated to honouring the Father, for this reason he often had disputes and contentions against the Jews and the Pharisees who both dishonoured him and the father. For this reason Jesus was in clear disunity with the Jews and the Pharisees for he said, "I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me." (John 8:49). But it was not just the Jews and the Pharisees he disputed with. He also disputed with his very own Peter saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan..." (Matthew 16:23, Mark 8:33). Note this was the same thing he said to the Devil himself in Luke 4:8. That is to tell you the sharpness of his disagreement with Peter for his words. This does not mean that Jesus was just being disagreeable with everyone. His principal purpose was to do the Father's will and anything that stood in the way was against him. Whether it be a seeming friend or a foe. Peter too wanted to do all that is God's will but had little knowledge of God's will and cared more for the safety and well being of Jesus Christ which of course anyone would think should be the Father's will too. Jesus on the other hand cared for the Father's will not his well being. And he gave the reason for chiding Peter that way when he continues to say, "for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." (Mark 8:33).

Shall we go on and on to list people who were of one mind and purpose yet had disagreements? Shall we talk of when Paul rebuked Peter? Shall we talk about Paul, Barnabas, and Mark? The list goes on, these all had one mind to do God's will but disputed over how it should be done.

That disputes occur amidst us who have one mind does not disprove the oneness of our minds but it proves the liveliness of unity. A healthy church must maintain contention, that is against every perceived falsehood, to maintain true unity. Churches in the times of debates were more healthy than we. There were debates, councils, and series of disputes for every perceived error and that made them healthy. We on the other hand are seeking a unity void of debates and so falsehood go unchecked. We can see truly that the absence of disputes doesn't necessarily mean we're united. It is in the midst of this unity of the mortuary that evil thrives in a holy way. For this reason, in seeking for unity we must not shy away from disputes and rebukes, but we must of at all cost ensure that nothing be done in strife. We must be very careful about this as strife could sometimes present itself as a sincere motive of seeking and pursuing the truth, but deep within what we have is just a self seeking strife. We must be careful and be sincere.

Disputes amidst united people reflects imperfection and not discord. It could be that one party is perfect and the other imperfect or both parties are imperfect. But when there's perfection in unity and oneness of mind there is no dispute. So we must strive for perfection where there is rebuke, reproving, and no discord. We must be careful not to have a pretended perfection for this will eventually lead us to that cold unity of the mortuary. While in the flesh, perfection may not be attainable, and that is why we should never shy from disputes, reproving, and other things by which we could correct wrongs. I shall talk on the subject in the chapter, "SEED OF CONCORD."

Prayer: *Dear Lord and Father, we know that unity is important but help us not deceive ourselves to seek to maintain our unity by means of corruption of deadness. Help us to be lively and sensitive and responsive to our doctrinal environment. Help us to shun every form of heresy and contend with it in simplicity and humility. Help us by so doing to maintain a unity in purity. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

UNITING AGAINST GOD'S WILL VS UNITING WITH THE GODHEAD

*"For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate
against thee."
(Psalm 83:5)*

The Wicked Unity Against God And His Word

*"Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What
have we spoken so much against thee?"
(Malachi 3:13)*

Another false unity is that in which Christians think that we can agree in a thing contrary to scriptures and it stands on the basis of our agreement. This is often not deliberately done but our ways sometimes tend to show that our thinking is in this line. This is often seen in the way people who insist in following scriptural standards are treated. If we introduce a thing contrary to scriptures and no one objects to it, people begin to see such things as binding on everyone. If someone says that he is not consenting to it because he can't see why it is justifiable scripturally, they'd tag him a discordant fellow seeking to destroy the unity of the church. So the agreement we have amidst ourselves is usually seen as something that should override what is written in scriptures.

Now here's the picture of such actions. If a man gives his children instructions to do something and they agree amidst themselves to do something else, they are united amidst themselves quite alright, but it only means they're united against their father. This is discord at the highest level. It were far better that they be divided amidst themselves trying to do what their father had instructed them than to be united amidst themselves against their father. To have discord amidst ourselves is a small thing, but when we unite to have discord against God, this is a great one and of great dire consequences.

The ultimate end of all division and disobedience is disunity with God. When we are agreed on anything contrary to scriptures, we conspire against him. Jeremiah 2:19 says, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." This form unity can also be likened to the unity we in Psalm 83:5 where it says, "For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee." They had one consent, they had a confederacy, but that consent and confederacy is against God. That is how are unity is when we unite with ourselves against God's word.

When we are united in compromise and backsliding we conspire against God and have left him. When we forsake God we break our unity with him. Let us cast out the foolish thought that it is more important to be in unity with ourselves than with God. This form of unity is the chief amongst all false forms of unity.

The Blessed Unity With God And His Word

*"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."
(1 John 1:3 - 4)*

I believe one of the cardinal characteristic of a Christian fellowship is that such fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, and of course the Holy Ghost too. It is also this that can characterise any unity with purity. It is sad that people fellowship together just like any social club would do, they dance, meet with each other, socialise, and what have you, and they're content with these and call themselves a church. But if the fellowship we have is not with the Father, then it is not a Christian fellowship, though we claim it is, and though we sound churchy using churchy terms, but still it is not a Christian fellowship.

Amos 5:14-15 says, "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." Here we see what it takes for God to be with us. It says we should seek good and not evil, we should hate the evil and love the good (referring to people now), establish judgment in the gate, etc., and those are the conditions given to us to have God dwell with us. But what I essentially want to point out here is this statement, "... as ye have spoken..." This tells us that even when people claim to have God dwelling in them, he may as well be absent. Though the people referred to in this passage claimed that God was with them, yet his dwelling with them was not dependent on their claiming so. Rather it was dependent on these other things mentioned. To have God dwell with us in our fellowships, we must meet his conditions. Let us not

be deceived about that.

What are his conditions? They're many, but for the purpose of our study, I shall refer to John 14:23 which says, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23). Keeping the commandment of God is the condition we must fulfil to have him dwell with us. That is why Jesus says, "and we will come unto him..." There's no two ways about that. Many churches today just go about establishing their own doctrines, their leaders combing them out of their heads, and they claim to fellowship with God. Some show outright disregard for scriptures claiming the death of Christ gave us freedom to do anything we wish. Others also set forth stringent moral rules and by the strictness of their rules deceive people who think that God has regards for strictness. However, God does not place strictness (or looseness) as a condition for his dwelling with us. Rather he places before us a simple condition of simple obedience to him without which he will not come to us. If we don't obey him in simplicity, we should not deceive ourselves that our fellowship is with him.

We must also note that Jesus statement here was in response to the question posed to him by Judas (not Iscariot) who said, "... Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22). So the reason why Jesus would fellowship with us (as we can see in his response) is simple obedience to his own words. Seeing that his statement is in response to what distinguishes his own (to whom he says, "we will come unto him") from the world, we therefore know that there's no difference between us and the world when we don't obey him. Not at all. We may have all the Christen names we wish to have and give all our activities all the "heavenly" names we wish to give it, but at doesn't make us in any way separate from the world. The church that must belong to Christ is one that is kept from the world through obedience to his word.

Furthermore, 2 John 1:9 says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not

in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." So, we cannot live in disobedience and belong to him simultaneously. For this reason much of today's churches don't belong to him. Many churches live in outright disobedience. When you look at people praying without obedience to scriptural standards guiding the practice you know people just enjoy deceiving themselves. You see women praying without covering their heads, and most shamefully clergy men who lead the church with a skull cap or other types of head covering on their heads while leading the church in prayer. You see women speaking in church when the Bible clearly forbids women from speaking or even asking questions in our gatherings. The error and disregard for scriptures go on and on. We certainly don't meet the conditions of having God dwell with us. We are just doing anything and everything the way we like. The clergy men are leading people astray for profit's sake not caring if or not our practices are in accordance to God's word. This is very sad. To call ourselves a church when our practices are so much contrary to scriptures is another colossal self deception. When we choose not to obey the Bible holistically there's no reason I should be here and you should be there calling ourselves the church. Let's not deceive ourselves. Total obedience is a condition to be met to qualify ourselves to be the church of Christ. This is the only means by which we can be united with God.

I shall end this chapter by presenting us with an advice from Aurelius Augustine (Bishop of Hippo) who said, "What we read, therefore, let us believe; and what we do not read, let us deem it wicked to add." He referred here to total obedience to what we read in scriptures. Let us stick to it and not add to what we read in scriptures. Our gatherings and practices must reflect what the Bible says so that people can know what the Bible teaches by observing our ways even when they've never read the Bible before. I shall talk about living lives in total conformity to God in the chapter "FULL DIVINE CONFORMITY."

Prayer: *Dear Father of our Lord Jesus, I see that our unity with ourselves is not as important as our obedience to your word. Help us to live a life of outright obedience to your commands as it behoves your servants to do. Keep of us from the deception of try to live in unity with ourselves without paying close attention and giving due care that we are in total obedience to your commands. Help us dear Lord. In Jesus' dear name I pray. Amen.*

Section 3

The Importance Of Having A United Church

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY TO BEING THE LIGHT

*"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."
(Matthew 5:14)*

Unity is very important for us if we must be lights of the world. A light that is shining is that light that's fulfilling its purpose. I spoke extensively about what Jesus means when he calls us lights in my book titled, "THE LIGHT AND THE SHINING LIGHT." Please get it on this link: <https://www.crystalframes.com.ng/stores/index.php/product/the-light-and-the-shining-light> . It is absolutely free.

Here however, I hope to point out to us the importance of unity to living up to this call to be light. First, we must note that ye is the plural form of thou. So Jesus, here, is referring to his disciples as a group and not as individuals only. And he says light and not lights meaning that they as a group are the light of the world and they as individuals. This informs us that they can't be light in the truest sense individually. It must be collectively. As individuals we can do much for the glory of God, but it is when we as a church collectively unite in the purity of God's word, reflecting to the world his holiness, that we can truly be a light by which men may glorify God. Yes, just like the song goes, "brighten the corner where you are," meaning the lives of individuals can shine the light of God's glory by well doing, but Jesus did not mean we shine his light as individuals only, but as most especially collectively. That his goodness may be characteristic of our collective image as perceived by the world.

This also true because as we must understand that the light of God which we shine to the world that does not reflect the unity of the godhead (which can only be shown collectively) is not complete. And what is not complete is not wholly true. And what is not wholly true cannot be the Light. For the Bible says, "whatsoever doth make manifest is light." Light does not reveal

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things in part unless that thing is hidden from the light. The light that doesn't make manifest the unity of the godhead and the unity of God with his church is not fit to be called a shining light. It may be a light, but such a light is hidden under the basket of disunity. So, let it be clear that it is only in our unity that the light we shine to world can be truly called shining light.

This does not mean we mustn't look to ourselves to ensure we live as lights as there are other parts of scriptures that emphasizes on the personal life and tells us of how we must be personally committed to following Christ as he is the Light. For example, John 8:12 says, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." This is very personal. I spoke extensively about the personal aspect of this doctrine of being the light in my other book (THE LIGHT AND THE SHINING LIGHT) as mentioned above, but we must know the importance of collectively being light too.

While the personal aspect of being lights refer to our mind being enlightened by God's illumination, the collective one refers to the light that shines and the world sees. This collective responsibility of being lights is very important to winning the world and having them glorify God our Father, while the personal aspect of being lights is important to our walk with God, obedience to him, and spiritual maturity.

For this reason, the importance of unity in purity to being the Light that our dear Lord spoke of cannot be over emphasised. Let us not let disunity cover that blessed light. May God help us in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Father, I see the clear calling on us to shine your light to the world. I also see that though we may strive in other things, yet if we're not united we shall not be able to shine your light to the world. Help us to be united that we may be able to shine your light to the world eliminating all darkness in Jesus' dear name. Amen.*

IMPORTANCE OF UNITY TO BEING SALTS

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

(Matthew 5:13)

Now I wish to talk about the importance of unity to being salt. This is very similar to being the light of the world but there's slight difference. As salt we preserve, but as light we radiate God's glory. As light, we show the world God's glory, but as salt we help them to both keep them in God's way and appreciate God's world.

The use of salt is to preserve and keep safe from corruption. Another use of salt is to give taste to food. These I believe were in the mind of Christ when he spoke the words in the verse above. Now by this statement he expresses what he expects from us. So let us look at these two use of salt and see how it applies to us.

Preservation

"...overcome evil with good."

(Romans 12:21)

There are many corruptions that plague the world. There are moral corruptions, ethical corruptions, societal corruption, and others.

By moral corruption, I mean a corruption of moral standards. A corruption of which people begin to lose the knowledge of the importance of morals and even despise morals. Examples of moral corruption in today's society is the practice of women wearing skimpy and revealing clothes. Corrupt

music videos and lyrics aimed at arousing sensual cravings. The list goes on and I shall not make this book a book of sins. So these things entail what I mean by moral corruption.

By ethical corruption I mean corruption in our dealings with others. This is very close to moral corruption but while moral corruption has to do more with individual corruption springing a perverted mind, this has to do with corruption in how we deal with others for example corrupt business dealings, embezzlement of public funds, over pricing etc. These are what I refer to ethical corruption.

Societal corruption has to do with corruption in the institutions of the society of which the foundation and most important is the home (the family). Societal corruption is when institutions such as the home, church, schools, court of law, etc. fail to fulfil their role. These institutions are corrupted when there are systems in place to batter them. When we find ourselves in a system where parents no longer have time to raise up their kids in a godly way, or leave them to themselves, or to a nanny or a nursery (people without that parental affection needed to raise up godly children), etc. the home has failed its purpose and our families have been corrupted for they are not fulfilling God's given role. I believe the home (family), not the nursery, is God's institution for raising kids. Corruption of the home is often achieved by encouraging women to work and engage in careers that would give them no time to impart godliness in their young ones. This is the most devastating of societal corruption for it is the foundation of every other societal corruption. Other institutions of our societies are often corrupted by any means that allows unqualified people in learning or character to occupy important positions of our societies.

These forms of corruption and other forms of corruption must be checked by us, being the salt that we are. We must make sure we prevent this corruption in the world, and where it is already, we must seek to reverse it.

If we are divided, we cannot effectively preserve and keep the world safe

from corruption. If one party of a divided church says it is okay, for example, that women should wear skimpy clothes, while another with the same gospel that the other claims to believe and preach says it is wrong. Who would listen to such people. If we speak with varying voices people would have no choice but to ignore.

Now it is very important that the voice of the church is not heard only in their sermons, but in what they allow and practice. So when we have varying stance on things, one allowing what the other stands against, the world is hearing our voice though we speak not. When though we claim to believe in one gospel our practices are different, the world sees our division and confusion. When these happens, we surely are bound to be ineffective. So if we must be effective in preserving the world from corruption, we must speak with one voice and the world would have no choice but listen. This is because, "Where the word of a king is, there is power..." (Ecclesiastes 8:4). And the King shall not dwell without our being united (Matthew 18:18).

As I was writing this book I started making some studies about dressing down history lane having the mind to write about Christian Dressing in this book initially (for we must be united in this too), but the issue of dressing is going to come as a separate book. Later as I was drawing this book to a conclusion, as I read some old historical books on dressing I saw the role the church played in preserving the society and what made me marvel was the power the church had. Time and time again excesses in dressing was checkmated by just a sermon from a church leader. Whenever the excesses in style and fashion was becoming widespread, it was either the monarch rules against it but the Christian leader's authority was just his sermon. When they notice these excesses, they just preached against it and the response of the society was obedience to that which was right. Now, that is what you call a salt, for they kept the society from evil. How different the case is today. We see sensuality everywhere, the media is corrupt, and everything is going bad, but the church has no voice to be heard though there be a host of speakers that speak from within her walls. Such a salt has

lost its value. It is profiles and is not even fit for the dung hill. This tells us that unity is important if we must be the salt of the earth, preserving it from evil. If we must regain the power we've lost, we must return to and maintain a unity in purity amidst ourselves.

Savour

*"Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"
(Job 6:6)*

Another function of salt is that it gives savour (pleasant taste) to food, making it desirable to be eaten. So when Jesus says, "Ye are the salt of the earth," he meant our lives is to make the world sweet and therefore desirable to live. I came to this understanding when I read an article somewhere on the net, in which the author gave the explanation (paraphrasingly) that to be a salt is to be good and caring so that the world would be sweet. She gave an example of a plumber she knew who was very conscientious. She narrated the good deeds of this man and concluded he was a salt of the earth.

There are many people down the history lane that have lived as salts. Jesus himself lived as one. He was so good that the people of his time said he has done all things well (Mark 7:37). The apostles lived as salts when through their ministry the Christian brotherhood shared their goods and money with those who were in need (Acts 2:44-47, Acts 4:34-35). At that time Barnabas being a salt was called "son of encouragement," (Acts 4:36-37). We can go through history lane and we'd discover a host of people who lived as salts, showing by their good works the love and goodness of God in the land of the living.

In being salts our unity is essential. Without unity we can't be the salt that we are. This is because there's no beauty in disunity and rancour. Let is

even claim that there's no resentment or bitterness in the division of the church, the world seeing us worship separately would definitely think there is. For this reason a divided church that sends feelings of resentments and bitterness to the world can't be a salt, for presenting resentment and bitterness to the world does not make it savoury. No one wants to live in a world plagued by resentment and bitterness. So to the salt our dear Master wants us to be, we must endeavour that we present to the world the beauty of God's peace and unity.

A divided church cannot make salts of individuals. When we don't speak with one voice in defining what is good and evil, members of a church become as confused as leaves in the wind. It is not possible to live a consistent victorious life worthy of being called a salt without a firm conviction of what is good and what is bad. If we speak with a divided voice of which we say a little yes and a little no about the same matter, we produce confused people who can't take a stand about anything.

William Temple, in his book titled, "Church and Nation," said, "The essence of sectarianism [denominationalism], as I understand it, is the gathering together of those people who live by the same part of the Creed, in order that, like mingling with like, they may develop a great intensity and fervour of devotion. For a moment, indeed, they may be far more effective than the great body of the Church, and yet they cannot become universal. There is something lacking from what they uphold, which someone needs." This is denominationalism at its best. But now that we see that it is a tool of self aggrandizement, we see that it is a total disaster. If denominationalism at its best produces sick and unbalanced Christians, what shall we then say of denominationalism seeing it is a tool for self aggrandizement?

William Temple went on to say, "If one set of people could only get dry food and no drink, and another set could only get drink and no food, neither would be healthy." That is why we have sick Christians who are so unfit for the challenge of the present times. We have a world of challenges

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around us that requires Christians to rise up to, but being so sick by the malnutrition of denominationalism, none of these challenges can be met with true Christian valour. As a matter of fact, the malnutrition has affected the vision of the contemporary Christian that they can't even see these challenges in the first place. If we must make individual Christians valiant in the Christian warfare, a united church is essential.

I learnt with firsthand experience when I was still a teens teacher, anything we teachers teach with absolute unity to students goes with more force. But the reverse is the case should one teacher say this and another teacher comes to counter it. The teens know relatively little so they're bound to be confused. From my life and from what I've read about others, no one lives a lives a righteous life when he has no definite stance on what is righteous. So without helping people with one voice to have a definite stance about righteousness they cannot live as salts. It is only when we direct people in the way of righteousness with one voice that they can indeed live a life of being salts. It is only by unity we can help people who fellowship with us live to the Lord's expectations in this regard of being salts.

After Jesus pointed out the fact that we are the salt of the world, he proceeded to tell us that it is possible for salts to lose its value and become profitless. He said such would be cast out and be trodden under foot. In the Gospel of Luke, we read, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Luke 14:34-35). I believe we don't want to lose our original value of being a savour that makes food pleasing and desirable to become what is not even fit for the dunghill. May God help us to retain our value both collectively and individually through our unity in purity. Amen

Prayer: *Dearest Lord Jesus, help us to live a life of salts. Help us to preserve the world from evil and corruption and help us by our good conduct to make the world savory for the good as well as for the bad. Let our kindness and benevolence cheer even the saddest heart and lighten the*

darkest corner. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

IMPORTANCE OF UNITY TO POWER AND INFLUENCE

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

(Matthew 18:19)

Jesus in Matthew 18:19 tells us what would happen if we agree. Agreement is the core of unity. As a matter of fact agreement is synonymous to unity. For this reason, we can conclude that Christ was telling us what will happen when we are united. He says that whatever we ask for in the state of unity shall be done for us by God which is in heaven. Ability to have what you desire done is what you call power.

Whenever the church is united, we have power with God over the affairs of men. We can decree a thing and it shall stand. We can determine what should or should not be in the world. It is not new that many Christians fear terrorists, but I say most confidently, that let all the terrorists in the world unite with all the armed forces in the world, they can't stand against a united church. Not even the Devil can stand against a united church that is agreed. This is another reason why the Devil fights primarily against our unity for it is a united church that can rule the world. If he's the prince of this world, you can see what a threat our unity is to him.

The very beast who Daniel describes with these words, "the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces," (Daniel 7:23), and with many other words he described these powerful beast, yet it was destroyed by the simple decision of the saints. For it is written in 26, "But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Now, who are those

that shall sit in judgment? It is written in verse 21 and 22, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." This informs that the judgment belonged to the saints. This judgment in verse 26 should be understood as a council. In other words a council of saints would be held and our simple decision shall put an end to that great and fierce beast. That it says judgment shall sit means shall come together to agree about what should be done with this beast. It is our agreement that shall bring an end to him because of the power given to us that through our agreement, what ever we shall request shall be done by our Father in heaven.

This should make us understand the greatness of the power we have in being united. We have great power with God. It is mysterious power that the world cannot understand neither can we. It is not founded in any armed force, alliance, or whatever, but it is found in God alone. We ourselves cannot not to point to it as others can point to their saying here or there is the source of their power or confidence, but we can't point anywhere, yet it is there all the same. But it is only in unity that we have access to it.

In the past, the church used to be a very powerful force in the society and the opinion of the church used to be a major consideration for people of the world as we were relatively more united then than now. Now that we have become very seemingly divided, we can't even be appealed to for almost anything. When the issue of same sex marriage came up, a single word of condemnation from a united church would have dealt a serious blow to the agenda and bring it to a speedy end. But some hypocrites who the Devil has planted in our midst to make us seem divided were declaring support for it while others stood against it. So our voice, because of the apparant division in our stance, became ineffective. For people who detested the practice, it was easy to hope for result in appealing to the fact that it is contrary to human traditions rather than to appeal to the stance of the church. Our disunity made us less influential to the mere traditions of the

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heathen. It broke my heart when I read the article that made me come to this realisation. The same way it happens in all other matters. When we are divided in anything, we become ineffective and uninfluential in it.

Charles wrote in his hymn, “Stand then against your foes, In close and firm array...” This is an advice we must take if we must be victorious. We must be united in our stance when we face the foe. If we observe any source of division, be it men, doctrine, feelings, etc. we must first deal with it first before engaging the foe. If we don't first deal with our divisions, our engagements with the foe will always be futile and injurious to us. Why is this so? This is because the most important thing in war and sports to determine a favorable outcome is formation. No one goes into battle and expect to win the day without a properly planned formation to guarantee victory. The very first thing God prescribed to the Israelites in the book of Numbers was the formation of their army. In the first chapter he numbers them, and in the second he gave them a formation. God himself knows the importance and expediency of formation. For us, the soldiers of Christ, our formation for a favorable outcome in Lord's battle is unity in purity. We must stand in close and firm array as we battle. There's no other way to having power, influence, and gaining victory than by means of unity."

Our strength is in our unity. We must maintain unity in every aspect of what we do for therein lies our power. We must not think that there are somethings of which we don't need to unite in. Some will think it is not important to be united in matters of dressing, ways of singing, lithurgies, etc. But we must be united in everything that characterises us as people. No part of these things is insignificant. The necessity of this is so clearly seen in the explanation of A.B. Simpson who said in his book, Wholly Sanctified, “the chain is never stronger than its weakest link.” We may be strong in doctrine, we may be strong in evangelism, we may be strong in any other thing, but our whole structure including our strongest points are as weak as the weakest link. Let us know that our unity is of paramount importance to us and so should be our priority and we must vicously fight to have it and maintain it. May God help us all. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Father, I see that it is by means of unity that we have both power and influence to prevail over the foe no matter how mighty he may seem. Dear Lord, we can't ask too much for this all important unity in your church. Please grant us this our hearts' desire in Jesus dearest name. Amen.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY TO REVIVAL

*"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."
(Acts 2:1 - 2:2)*

Finally, I'll like to talk on the importance of unity to revival. In his sermon, "The Unity That Brings Revival," A.W. Tozer pointed out that we are fond of praying a wrong prayer. We often ask God to send his Spirit upon us so that we can be united, but on the contrary, we ought to pray that God should unite us so that his Spirit can come upon us. The text above shows clearly that it was the being in one accord of the apostles that caused the Spirit to come upon them on the day of Pentecost.

The church has been looking for revival for a long time now, but she shall see no revival until she has known the importance of unity, remove all divisive elements from within her, and becomes indeed united. For the reason of the orderly nature of the Spirit of God, we must be united for him to abide with us. Without unity we'd be abandoned to be alone.

The Spirit of God is an orderly one. It would work with us (collectively) when we are united. The Devil knows this so well and that is why he keeps fighting against our unity through every possible means. He knows that our success lies in our unity. But unfortunately we don't seem to know this. So we take our fight to other things that are so unimportant to us. We talk about evangelism, we talk about missions, church growth mechanism, etc. Things which can by no means help us. But it is in unity that we can succeed in God's mandate.

Hosea 7:1 says, "They return, but not to the most High: they are like a

deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt." People wanting to be Revivalists keep yelling that we must return yet not knowing where to return to. Some would point us to one old evangelist, others to one church system, yet others to one saint. But these are the wrong places to return to. The verse above gives us a good description of such actions. It says they return (just as we wish to return) but not to the most High. We don't return to his will to be united as he is united in the godhead. We keep creating our own ideals and ask people to return to those ideals. This, rather than creating unity, further divides the church and creates a confusion that can be hardly gotten rid of. If we must return, it must be to God and not any old evangelist or church system. Do we want revival? Let us return to God and unite. Ignore church founders and owners, ignore ideals of men, resist the constraint they place on us, and let us unite in the purity of God's word. Herein lies the answer to our realizing of the long overdue revival.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Father, and Friend, the church is over due for revival and how I see that we are the ones keeping ourselves from that revival. Help us o Father to stop denying ourselves this blessedness of being revived. Help us to come to together in the purity of your word that we may be revived indeed. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Section 4

Attaining And Sustaining Unity In Purity

SEED OF CONCORD

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

(Jude 1:3)

Now I wish to talk about practical things that could be done to unify the church. There're many things to be done in ensuring that we have a united church, but almost all must be done by sowing the seed of concord. And what is this seed of concord? Contention. That is it. The church must be united through contention and the unity must be maintained throughout our time in this world by means of contention. It is by sowing this seed of concord which ensues peace amidst brethren that we prove ourselves to be the children of God, for the Bible says, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." It is by means of contention that we as brethren make peace with one another. Failure to understand this fact or desire a contention-less unity is to desire the unity of mortuary as I've spoken of in an earlier chapter.

It is very common for hypocrites who desire to have their way in the church, rather than God's way, to rebuff the contention of the upright who desire God's way by calling their contention a seed of discord. But you see, it is the Bible that commands us saying, "earnestly contend..." It is not that we are to desire contention, but because we are living in a fallen world, we must know that in doing anything right we would face resistance, and if that right thing must still be done notwithstanding resistance, it can only be through contention.

Contention is necessary because no action aimed at unifying the church can be done without contention. It is by contending with evils and heresies that a united church must be maintained. There's no two ways about it.

It may seem surprising to hear that I say that it is by contention that we as brethren can be united, but let us take an example from scriptures. Acts 11:2-18 presents us with a classic example of how contention brings unity. Acts 11:2-4 says, "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them..." Here Peter was just returning from Cornelius' house in Caesarea where he had preached and baptised Gentiles. A people with a particular school of thought which is described here as "they that were of the circumcision," contended with Peter. They didn't keep quiet in order to maintain that blissless unity of the mortuary, but they contended with Peter though he was easily seen as the foremost of the apostles. Note that they had a legitimate argument based on the Law and their concern was due to the reverence they had for God and his Law. Peter himself on a normal day won't have gone to Cornelius's house, but the Holy Ghost bid him specially to go. So the reason for contention was genuine. Peter responded the right way to this contention and that should serve as an example to us. He didn't ignore them, count the contention as an insult to his person, consider it divisive, nor did he attribute malice to it, but rather with understanding he "rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them."

Now is contention divisive? Is it not by contention that we get united? Look at the result of contention, the seed of concord, in Acts 11:18 which says, "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." By means of contention, they and Peter became of one mind. Peter was like them before, but by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, he had gone ahead of them in understanding, thus they and him were no more of one mind. But by means of contention, they became of one mind again. Their response also serves as an example to us. They weren't stupidly contentious just to steer up rancour, rather they pointed out what they perceived was

wrongdoing on the part of Peter, but as soon as they heard his explanation, they accepted and gave glory to God.

Sometimes contention may not be against what is good but against what is misunderstood, as in the case of Peter and they of the circumcision. And other times, if not most times, it shall be against the devils amidst us. In both ways it is by means of contention that we can attain to unity in purity. If it is against what is misunderstood, it maintains unity. But if it is against what is evil, it maintains purity. We either contend to realise the truth and be united by being of one mind when we have a better understanding like those ahead of us in the faith. But there're times when heretics try to spread fallacy in our midst. It is also by strong contention that we can drive them out and silence them. Contentions in both cases are good for us.

Now we must be very careful about this. I know that it would be very easy for people to try to justify strife and schism and say they're contending for the faith. Philippians 2:3 warns, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." So we must be careful that while we contend for the truth, we are actually contending for the truth and not vainglory. As I've explained in an earlier chapter, strife is not necessarily contention but contention can be done in strife. Strife is not fighting for the truth. Strife is contending with another to prove you're right or better, while the contention I speak of is striving for the truth against falsehood. We must also know that to strive is also different from strife. You strive when you make a strenuous effort, but strife always has a party that it works against. You can strive to be a great athlete which does not set you against another. However strife always has someone you're contending against. So while we must strive for the truth, we mustn't strive with strife. Contending for the faith has the sole goal of proving what is right and according to God's will. Strife and vainglory has self in its centre. So we must be careful and contend even with those who present the seed of concord as a pretext for strife and vainglory. It is a contention free of strife that can ensure unity. Once strife and vainglory is involved, we shall only further divide the church.

Now the Bible frowns completely at the idea of strife. Listen to this, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (James 3:13-18). We see here that our contention must not have strife in it. The wisdom by which we contend that has strife, vainglory, or envy, etc., we are told is earthly, sensual, and devilish. So let us not deceive ourselves when we have these in our hearts when contending. For with these in our hearts, we are not contending for the truth. Then it tells us what makes the true wisdom by which we contend for the truth. It says such wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and hypocrisy." This is the wisdom that, if we contend with, we shall unite the church. This is the wisdom we can see in the contention of them that "were of the circumcision." Can you see why such contention is the seed of concord? When we contend these way, the vainglorious and heretic would still see us as sowing seed of discord, but let us examine our hearts and see if these virtue that qualifies the true wisdom from above dwells in it. Whatever contention we do with these virtues in our heart is the same as the sowing of concord. Let no man make us feel bad when we contend in the spirit of such wisdom.

When someone contends against what he perceives to be false, when a person with a better understanding puts him right so as to see that there's nothing false in it, he would realise and change his stance easily and joyfully like in our example above. Joyfully because though he was wrong, the truth for which he was contending still prevails. But when a person is contending out of strife and vainglory, when he presents what he thinks is

right and another that has a better understanding corrects him, he'd be offended and refuse to accept that he's wrong and keep arguing baselessly even though he is fully conscious of the fact that he's wrong. He's offended and keeps arguing because he wasn't contending for the truth but he was only trying to show off what he thinks he knew. So, on our part, let us contend earnestly for the truth but not out of strife and vainglory. Where we see that we are wrong, let us gladly embrace the truth and thank the giver of the truth, God, and the vessel, teacher or preacher. This is how contention, amongst people who truly desire to know and live according to the truth, can easily bring about unity in purity. If everyone keeps quiet, they may attain to unity, but that unity would be without purity, and where there's no purity we have no unity with the Godhead. And without unity with the godhead, we have no unity at all in reality. So we can see how that contention is indeed the seed of concord.

Now all we must be careful. Envy, vainglory, pride, and other devilish vices are things that spring up within us quite easily and we can easily find them lurking about even our good motives. We may never even suspect that they're there except by careful and thorough self examination. So all through our endeavors of earnest contention, we must consistently examine our hearts and take whatever devilish thing we find lurking there to the Lord in prayer to help us deal with. By this shall we be able to unite the church and give no room for heresies in our midsts. So my brethren, let us never cease to contend and keep contending.

Paul lamented in Philippians 2:21, saying, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." We should not be this way. We should not seek our own but the things of Christ. We should seek the unity of his church at all cost. We should not shy away from contention. One of the chief reasons for shying away from contention is love of ease and undisturbed comfort. That is to be self seeking. Let us not seek our own but the things of Christ. Let us cast ease and the love of undisturbed comforts away and begin to seek the things of Christ.

So, having spoken all about what seed of concord is and what it is not, we shall now proceed to look, in the following chapters, at a few things we need to do to ensure we have a united church. At one leve or the other, these require contention, but let us be resolute to seek the things which are Christs including the unity of his church.

Prayer: *Dearest Lord, it is quite surprising to realize that a thing that seem as divisive as contention could be in its very self the very means by which we can be perfectly united. Help us not to seek undisturbed comfort while your church lies in a state of division. Let us earnestly contend for the faith by the spirit and wisdom of meekness, pureness, peaceableness, and gentleness. Give us a heart that is easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and hypocrisy. Help us to ceaselessly sow the seed of concord now and always. This I ask in your dear name. Amen.*

KNOWING AND DOING THE TRUTH

*"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour:
for we are members one of another."
(Ephesians 4:25)*

Being of one entails speaking of truth with each other. This is not just truthful verbal communication but all what we do together should be founded on the truth. Not misconstrued lies, but actual truth. This means that we should strive to know the truth first. It is in the absense of absolute truth that division occurs.

It is a logical fact that truth cannot contradict truth, for this reason it is a certainty that if everyman knows and speaks the truth, there's no way that division would be in our midst. If we all isolate ourselves and seek the truth and succeed in our search to find the truth and do the truth, every time we meet we shall find ourselves in perfect unity. This is simply because each individual sought the truth. So knowing and doing the truth is essential to unity.

Anywhere you see discord there are only two possibilities. The first, either every party (either knowingly or unknowingly) don't stand for the truth. The second, some of the parties stand for the truth while some others don't stand for the truth. These are the only two possibilities. So everywhere you see disagreement, there is always either the complete absence of truth or there is the absence of absolute truth. And everywhere you find perfect unity and harmony, there is perfect truth.

Now there are different ways to see truth and all these forms of truth are all important to maintain unity. There's truth in communication, truth in doctrine, there is truth in motive, and there's truth in the heart.

-By truth in communication I mean the truth we say in our conversations with others (Ephesians 4:25). This is the truth we say when we converse. For example, to say you have a car when you don't have one is a communicational lie, while to admit you don't have one is what I refer to as communicational truth. This is just being frank. There's no much need for deep knowledge or understanding in speaking such truth because this is simply admitting this truth as you've seen but it is also very important that we speak the truth with one another to attain to a state of unity.

-By truth in doctrine, I refer to teaching, alleging, affirmation, and beliefs we hold to be true about God and about the faith (Matthew 22:16). For example, teaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is a doctrinal truth and teaching otherwise is doctrinal falsehood. This truth requires knowledge and understanding to. One can teach doctrinal lies while thinking he's teaching the truth all the while. Jesus had a deep knowledge and understanding to be able to teach the ways of God in truth. To have and maintain unity, those who handle matters of Christian doctrine needs to be vast in knowledge and understanding, else they'd teach lies while intending to teach the truth. Failure to do this will inevitably divide the church.

-Now truth of motive is very critical (Matthew 23:14). Where this is absent, even in the midst of every other form of truth, unity cannot exist. By truth in motive, I mean when ones motive is clearly seen in his outward disposition, gestures, actions or words. The absence of this is hypocrisy. People can claim to pursue something and persuade others that the reason they're pursuing this thing is for its goodness, whereas they're pursuing it to achieve a selfish end. This was the way of the Pharisees. They had greed but they were very clever to hide it under many religious observance. Preachers of today do very much the same. For example, a preacher keeps preaching about money and giving, claiming that he's doing so because the gospel needs money to be preached far and wide. While it is good to preach the gospel far and wide, yet preaching about giving money is of necessity out of a false motive. This we can easily know is falsehood in

motive because we know that without preaching about money and having so very little, the apostles preached the gospel far and wide with just zeal, love, courage, understanding, etc., and power of the Holy Ghost. There's no way that we could have sincerity in our motives that the sort of church division we have today would exist. The duplicity of denomination is a reflection of the gross insincerity we have in our midst. Truth in motive is sincerity. We must never allow pretense and hypocrisy to divide us. While we must be very careful in ourselves to ensure that our motive is in agreement with our outward disposition, we must also be wise enough to discern when others are being sincere or not. If we don't watch against this, division shall remain in our midst.

-Lastly, what I refer to as truth in the heart is sincerity with yourself (Psalms 15:2). For example, when you seek God with truth in the heart, you seek him for who he is and not to achieve your own end. This is very important that we strive to do personally for no one except we and God can really know when we speak the truth in our hearts. Many Christians today live a life void of this truth. They may affirm what is true, speak the truth with others, they may even be sincere in their motives, but the truth in the heart can still be lacking. They seek God, they pray, and o how they pray, they worship, they do a lot, but all that just for what they think they can get from God. You must have heard how people are motivated to worship by with this statement, "when praises go up, blessings come down." This is falsehood in the heart. We praising God for the wrong reason. You praise someone when you observe their merit not because you want something from them. Christians are being trained today by the present leadership to be this way. I've have seen such insincerity severally amidst Christians. This won't help us. I know such insincerity hides from us painful and inconvenient truth, but when we admit things to be the way they are our personal life and consequently our fellowship with one another would be healthy and sweet. We must be true to ourselves. People who can't be true to themselves find it hard uniting on the truth of the scriptures.

Let this be our endeavour to consistently seek the truth in the ways I've

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explained and differentiated them above, for without it there can be no unity. So, we must seek the truth with sincere hearts. May God help us to seek and do that which is true in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *O Father Lord, I see that seeking and doing the truth is of a cardinal importance to attaining and maintaining unity. Help us to thoroughly truthful and sincere at every level of conversation, doctrine, thought and reason. Remove all trace of hypocrisy from us in Jesus' name. Amen.*

FULL DIVINE CONFORMITY

*"Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left."
(Deuteronomy 5:32)*

One thing we always ought to keep in mind is something that is well known and very glaring, which is that the word of God is amidst us for a purpose. It is not amidst us for fancy nor for us to take for granted. God said: "my word... that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11). So it is among us for a purpose. For what purpose is it here with us? Full divine conformity. It is here to enable us in the patterning of the self to that which is obtainable above and not to that which is merely around. That which is above we cannot attain to, but he who is from above has sent his word into our midst for the purpose that we might fully conform to that which is divine.

The church must be careful about what we conform to. Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." It is sad however to watch as the church is being patterned to the system of the world in many things. People wish to run the church as if it were a personal business and use methods they see in the world, and by so doing, they make the church conform to the world. It is not a new thing to hear of "church business." They wish to run the church as a profit making venture. This they have gotten from the world and wish to align the church to such pattern for profit's sake. But we must not conform to the world in anything but only to the word of God which came to us from above.

Jeremiah 11:8 says, "Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon

them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not." Along side with avoiding looking around (i.e. at the world), we must not look inward at our imaginations either. All our pattern of things must be based on the word, and to the word must all other things, whether they be imaginations, opinions, popular belief, etc., to the word must all these fall and give way.

Jeremiah 10:2 also says, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen..." We are not to pattern ourselves, individually or collectively, to the way and manner of life of the heathen, neither should we have their fears. If in running their own organisation and institution, the fear of money drives them to make certain decisions, we must know that God is our own provider. If they do things to maintain a good patronage (from clients) we must know that our service is to God and to God alone. We must not think the way they do for our goal is to serve God and do his will which of course is not in all their own desire to do. For this reason, conforming to the ways of the heathen in anything at all will definitely not allow us to attain to a state of full divine conformity.

I have heard many Bible expositors say things like, "the way I'd like to understand this scripture is this..." But why would a man take that which is from above and choose the way he wants to understand it? I suppose when many come out of the seminary they feel that power has been given them to interpret scriptures or even misinterpret it the way they like. But this role, as to giving meaning to the content of scriptures, belongs to the Holy Ghost and not to anyone else for private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:20). We ought to just see the scriptures and accept it the way it comes, and pattern ourselves and desires after that which is given us from above rather than patterning of that which is from above after the self. Any who does this evil of patterning that which is from above to that which is of the self is prepared for doom already, and is set on fire even presently, only that he is not yet engulfed by it. Therefore there is still a remedy, which is repentance.

Hosea 8:6 says, "the workman made it; therefore it is not God." Such was the way of ancient Israel in the times of their rebellion to serve graven images, but Hosea plainly puts it clearly here that anything that is a product of human imaginations or craftiness is not God. For this reason, our doctrines and practices must not be the product of the workman, in other words, the crafty thinkers, but must be only that which God has ordained.

Hosea went on to write, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." (Hosea 8:12). The doctrines of God are great things that urge us to full divine conformity, and gives us both the power and glory of the divine, but the disobedient and foolish count it as strange things. They count the greatness of the wisdom and excellency of God's method as revealed in his word, and the glory and power that comes with it a strange thing. It is strange for women not to talk in the churches, though this shows the beauty of orderliness in our assembly. It is strange for women to pray with covered hair, though this is a mark of reverence of the divine presence of the angels in our midsts. It is a strange thing to deny ourselves as Christ as commanded despite the exceeding great reward that comes to us in this life and in that which is to come by these means of self sacrifice. So conformed to the world is the average Christian that he can't see how great the commandments of God is. The opinions of such people ought not to stop us from pursuing full divine conformity as we are urged by the great things written in the law of our Great God, though they think it is a strange thing. We must pray that God should reveal the greatness of the things he commanded us to us, so that we could more willingly and gladly conform to it.

The Bible says in Isaiah 33:22, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us." The Lord is the one who must determine all our values and not men. The Lord is to show us how we are to understand scriptures and not the self, imaginations, or our learning. God must have preeminence in instructing us and when he instructs, we must conform fully to what he says.

Jeremiah 7:24 says, "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward." The ways of God are the ways of righteousness and our ways are the ways of wickedness. It says that those who walked in the counsels of the imagination of their evil heart shall go backwards and not forward. Whenever we have men who would be telling us how they'd like to understand scriptures, we should be confident of this one fact that we shall go backwards and not forward. We shall relapse into ignominy and shame of paganism while thinking we're still in the faith. It would just be a matter of time before we are wholly lost in confusion and separation from God.

To this also agrees Jeremiah 9:12-14 which says, "Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:" Working after our imaginations would only bring judgment and not mercy. Yes we may not have an idol called Baal today, but whatever we believe as a result of our imaginations is an idol all the same. To them Baal was their imagination, i.e. what they thought should be worshiped and what they thought could deliver. So whether it is Baal or just false imaginations, the origin of the error (the imagination) is the same and so shall the consequence be the same. Let us be warned for these things are written for our example.

We must learn to have a fixed heavenward gaze and learn to be indifferent to those things around us which are carnal. We must be able to ignore that which is temporal if we must attain through total conformity to that which is eternal even while in this world. It is not a partial conformity that God had in mind for sending his word, but completely full conformity. Nothing should be left out. We should not go shopping in the scriptures for what we

wish to hold on to, but take the whole of it and conform to the whole of it. It is not possible to take part of scriptures and leave the rest. Vincent Cheung in his book, "Defending the Faith," puts it so simply well, "The Bible is a Package Deal. Please take it or leave it." That is why the Bible says, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." (Deuteronomy 5:32). You must follow it completely.

The Bible says in Isaiah 42:19-21 "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord 's servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable." Here we understand that no one whose vision is so sharp in seeing the things of this world can be a fit servant of God. The effect of this vision in such a person's life will be carnal conformity. But he that does not peep here and there to see how things are done in the world so as to emulate or be influenced by them, he that is so indifferent to the things going on around him, he whose vision is fixed on the divine, on that which comes to us from above [The Bible], he it is that will attain divine conformity. He it is that is the servant of God. He it is that is very blind and deaf to the world, yet perfect. The world may say, "if you prohibit women from speaking in your gathering, you're partial and are discriminating against women," yet, no matter how loud they are, he is deaf and continue in his Lord's will. The world may say, "it is foolish to deny yourself such goods that the world has to offer," yet, being deaf, he continues in his life of self denial. They'll show him the glory of the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and offer saying, "all shall be thine if you would only turn from these precepts of your God," yet being blind he doesn't see it. Though the whole world and all the inhabitants sees it so much as to fight for it, kill for it, etc., but he simply cannot see the glory in what the world presents as glorious. He's that blind. This blindness and deafness keeps us steadfastly by God. This is the blindness and deafness of perfection. Such a person, having his gaze and rapt attention on that which is divine, will magnify the law of the

divine, he will make it honourable. God delights himself in such a servant and it such servants that must make up the elders of the church. And because the elders are to be an example for the rest of the brethren, the church must, over time, be characterised by such holy blindness and deafness.

Isaiah 29:13-14 says, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Honouring God only with our lips is a failure to conform to his will. He wants us to honour him with our whole hearts. We must not seek after the precepts of men but the precepts of God.

It is true that the precepts of men prevalent in the contemporary church teaches men to fear to God in a way, but God is even against that. He said in the verse above, "their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." The fear of God that we have must be such as is taught by his word. For the fear that people teach about God is the fear that if you don't pay your tithe, the cankerworm and the palmerworm would destroy your harvest, the Lord of hosts would cause holes to be in your pocket, that if you don't give money to church project, you will spend that money in the hospital, if you don't give them money, God would fight against you and destroy you, etc. They even cause people to fear that God would kill their family members just because they didn't give their money to them. Others teach you that you should fear your pastors and dread them because whatever they say about you must come to pass. If they say you'd become the president of the world, it would come to pass. If they say you'd become so impoverished to the extent of feeding with swine, it would come to pass. So men fear them and this "fear of God" they teach, they have secured for themselves impunity. So these fear of God taught by men are not God's will. We must fear him according to that which is written in his word.

The wisdom of men will fail, but hear what the psalmist says about the precept of God, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." (Psalm 119:100). We must gaze steadily into his word, hearing and learning from him. This conformity would make the church far more excellent than the world. However we have an evil system in the church today in which we keep consulting everything else and leave God aside. We have multiple group discussions, online forums, go through copious Bible commentaries, ask men for advice, instructions, guidance and counselling, and even commandments, but hardly before we really approach God to speak to us. We assume he will speak to us through these endeavours of ours of consulting others, but, brethren, God wants to speak to us in person. If we indeed honour him with the whole heart, in drawing close to him for guidance because of our simple trust in him, we will not stop at anything short of the full divine conformity.

We needn't fall into the doleful state of perplexity that it is not possible for us to know what God means by each and every word in his word in itself. We need nothing outside the word of God to understand fully his will. Let us spend time on our knees more than we do with commentaries and studying popular ideologies and see if this divine conformity does not flow in us freely without much of our effort. For to conform the self to that which is written, we must understand it the way God said it, but the speaking voice of God is drowned in the multitude of Biblical commentaries. Rather than spending so much time seeking Bible commentaries or listening to men, spend more time on your knees presenting his word to him to explain it to you. When he speaks to you, then, and only then, can you conform yourself to that which is divine.

In writing the ensuing chapters, I'm seeking not a partial or selective return to God's purpose, but that we first find his purpose and then return all the way back to it conforming absolutely to it. Without such conformity, we cannot attain to unity in purity.

Unity In Purity

Prayer: *Dear Lord God, your word tells us quite plainly that you sent us your word for a purpose. Please let it achieve that purpose in making us whole conformed to your own standards and will. Help us not to be lured into the glittering but vain, failure prone ways of the world. Help us to blind and deaf to all that is in the world but have a steady gaze on you in Jesus' name. Amen.*

WALKING IN CONSONANCE WITH THE FATHERS

*"What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?"
(1 Corinthians 14:36)*

This question in the verse above was asked by Paul but he provided no answer because the answer is simple. This is a question we should endeavor to ask ourselves, give the right response to it and act accordingly. From this text we can see that it is not God's will for us to act as if we are the only ones to whom the word of God came to. We must live and act knowing that it did not originate from us. That is what the apostle is pointing to when he says, "came the word of God out from you?" So, we must understand that it has its origin which is of course not from us. We must also understand that it came to us but not to us only. This is what the apostle meant when he says, "came it unto you only?" For this reason, we ought to live our Christian lives with these others in view. Those from whom it originated, the apostles (of course we know it is by the Spirit of God working in them so the real origin of the word of God is God), and those who have had it down the years before us. As for those who would come after us, we have nothing to think of but what legacy we would leave behind for them. So, it is very important for us to live in consonance with all those that has lived as Christians before us. From the apostles down through every age, time, and era, until now. Therefore I will like to talk on the importance of walking in consonance with the fathers.

Who Are The Fathers?

*"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets."
(Hebrews 1:1)*

By fathers I will be referring to as many as have stood for Christ down the years but ultimately the apostles. Having surely known that the apostles were approved of God in their utterance and works, they will be the ultimate reference point when talking about fathers, but we have also men who had given their all for God and were also approved of God. We cannot afford to loose sight of these also.

Fathers should not be misunderstand to mean what Christ condemned, for he says, "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Matthew 23:9). Here Jesus condemned calling people father so as to place in them the trust or confidence you'd put in your heavenly Father. Father has many usages but he doesn't mean it is a sin to call our earthly fathers by what they are. But we mustn't place trust in or worship any body on the surface of the earth. So we can call our earthly fathers by what they are. Each nation has a founding father or founding fathers and it is okay to call them too by what they are. This applies to movements and causes too. Paul also says, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." (1 Corinthians 4:15). Paul was saying that he was in a way a father, but not in the sense that they should place their trust and hope in him nor to worship him.

The sense in which I'm using the word fathers to describe our predecessors in the faith was also used by Peter where he says, "And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:4). So we can see that this sense is different from what Christ prohibits us from

doing. Father here simply means predecessors in the faith. That's all. We should bear this in mind as we take a look at the fathers.

Evil Schemes To Alienate Christians From Their Fathers

*"Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."
(Genesis 37:28)*

It is sad today that many church leaders try to shield their members from doing too much studies about past heroes of the faith for the fear that people may find faults with their service when they compare them with those of these heroes. They scare you by claiming that when you study the life and writings of Christians, you'd confuse yourself. They tend to make the answer of the question Paul asked to be "YES, it began with us and came to us only," and in that case we can complete the statement thus; "and it shall perish with us." They say in essence, "don't bother yourself about those who have come down the years because this word came from us and to us only."

I heard a man say that if the Devil wishes to kill a Christian, he first of all isolates him. Then he can kill him with ease. This is true of our time. The Devil indeed wishes to kill us so he tries to make us get alienated from the fathers so that he can kill us with ease. And truly he is succeeding in that. The kind of poison we consume as Christian doctrines has completely killed very many. Had we lived in consonance with the fathers we could have easily spotted out these poisons and saved our souls. This is much to the detriment of the church. There're always evil in the schemes of people who do this. They have lies to tell but they know if you look at your

predecessors you could easily tell. Others, knowing they're rendering bad service to God that is injurious to his church, try to hide the predecessors in order to avoid the criticism that'll come there way when we see the more excellent service rendered to God by the predecessors.

As I write these lines, I'm currently reading a novel titled "Adrift in New York." In this book a boy was stolen by his cousin and sent to a far away land. He tried by every hypocritical means to convince the man that the boy was dead and that he should give up the hope of seeing him again. He did this knowing that if he succeeded all the man's wealth would come to him, for the man was very wealthy. He did all he could to ensure the boy remains away and that the boy knows nothing of who his real father was. This is the same with the church, because the Devil knows the richness of our heritage, he tries to alienate us from our fathers. He tries to make us think that we have little or nothing to benefit from them and that they are indeed dangerous to us. This he achieves through hypocritical leaders and other liars.

I once read an article online talking about the stance of some early Christians about marriage, and they wrote about Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. The writer said Augustine's argument is that the union of male and female except for the purpose of procreation is strongly forbidden. But reading what Augustine wrote firsthand, I see that he didn't say anything of such. He only said the union of male and female except for the purpose of procreation is a venial sin. Now, how does venial sin mean "strongly forbidden?" Venial sin simply must be understood as what is not expedient to do. For though it is called venial "sin," we must understand that in those times what is inexpedient is what is considered venial sin. For the purpose of clearly defining the scriptural stance of the church on various matters, such terms like "venial sin" and "mortal sin," were coined to help in proper categorising of actions. And from all I've seen, it is not that they say that there's a sin that is greater than others as Roman Catholics like to explain, but what forms these two categories is that while mortal sin involves all wrong doings as spelt out by the Bible, venial sin

comprises of what is not sin but is inexpedient.

I read his argument on the matter and it was very intelligent indeed and worthy of Christian consideration. But when people (whether purposely or ignorantly) misquote early fathers, they make them unacceptable to us and we begin to distance ourselves from them. While such a writer paint Aurelius Augustine as a extremist of purity, if only we consider even a little his argument, it would have done us a lot of good and corrected many of the faulty mentality we have today about marriage. Today marriage is often seen as a legalised and lawful restricted sex institution, but Aurelius Augustine puts it right that it must not be seen as such bringing out tangible facts from scriptures in defence of his point. But while he did this good service in pure Christian wisdom, a present day writer, in his ignorance or ill will, misquotes him and paints him in a way that is repulsive not just to us but to reason.

Now we have much heritage from people like Aurelius Augustine. Had we been well acquainted with him and his writings, we would have known how false the accusation against the church is, that claims that Galileo was persecuted because the church's belief is that the world was flat, and that because Galileo was proving it wrong, the church persecuted him. For Augustine as early as over one million years before Galileo said categorically that the world was spherical in shape. This was the church's stance through every age even until and after the time of Galileo. But with the story of Galileo many keep making Christians seem like a bunch of people who are ignorant and refuse to listen to reason and science. Galileo was persecuted indeed, but his persecutors ought to be isolated in their actions for they did not do it in defence of the church but in defence of their own ego.

The church has got great thinkers, achievers (even in secular affairs), inventors, and very successful and just emperors, that we could boast of and whose arguments, way of life, and achievements could rebuff many vain babblers who speak derogatorily about our intellect and the soundness

of our faith. Apart from the deeds of men, when you read the history of the faith, you see the very hand of God at work through his divine providence. Sometimes I just sit back and wonder what an incredible story is the church down history lane. But the church is constantly being lured to abandon their heritage and not many people make study into these things.

Now, we lose a host of our heritage when we can't distinguish between Catholicism and Roman Catholicism. Now many Christian stalwarts have been disowned by Christians because they think they are Roman Catholics. Now, it would be good first of all to understand the world of difference between Catholic and Roman Catholic. Catholic means universal. This name became popular to describe Christians who hold the teachings of Bible as it is at a time when so many heresies were springing up from every corner. To checkmate these heresies, Bishops throughout the Christian world came together to discuss on the questions the heretics were presenting. When they met, they declared with all the force of Bishopric reaffirming what the Bible teaches and condemn every heresy that had sprung up. Their decision was considered universal because it was the decision of Bishops from all the Christian world. People who hold to the Biblical affirmation of these Bishops were called Catholics (holding to universal truth). Much later, however, through treachery and schism, the Pope gained primacy through the scoundrel and murderer of an emperor called Emperor Phocas. They began to advance a system of belief that aligns the Christian faith to Roman idolatry. So there is a world of difference between Catholic and Roman Catholic as there is a world of difference between Bible believing Christians and Idolaters.

After the Pope gained primacy, there were many Christians who also were under the leadership of the Pope too. These too were considered Roman Catholics majorly for being under the leadership of the Pope. Though these were Catholics by name, yet they were not by faith. Saint Francis of Assisi for example was an awesome Christian but many say he's a Roman Catholic, however he served God selflessly and opposed the Pope when he called for a Crusade. Even Martin Luther was a considered a Roman

Catholic despite his anti-Pope beliefs, however, unlike Saint Francis, his disagreement with the Pope and Popish teachings went beyond what a common name could hold.

It is also a common practice of Roman Catholics to lay hold of these great men as one of theirs because this helps them to hide the rottenness of their heresy with the beauty of the character of these men. So, we mustn't let these names let us reject great Christians of old without first considering their life, their faith, and doctrine (for those who taught others). Associating real saints to the Roman Catholic faith alienates them from us, and by this the Roman Catholics rob us of much of our heritage.

The Importance Of History

*"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph."
(Exodus 1:8)*

*"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."
(Deuteronomy 32:7)*

With all that said, we must look at the importance of history and to be precise, Church history. There is a story I heard that goes thus:

Once upon a time in the animal kingdom, Mr. Hare was asked, "how many times do you have to make a mistake before you can learn your lessons?" Mr. Hare boasted and proudly said, "I can only make a mistake once before learning my lessons and NEVER repeat that mistake..." He went on and on boastfully saying how it were impossible for him to make a mistake more than once. Then Mr. Tortoise was asked, "how many times will you make a mistake before you can learn your lesson?" He simply said, "I'll never

make a mistake, I'll learn from Mr. Hare's mistakes."

We need to look back into history to avoid mistakes that were made in the past. Why must we suffer for our mistakes when we can avoid it altogether. History is very very important both in schools and the church of Christ. In living with the fathers in view, we must learn from their mistakes, improve on the things they did well, see our wrong doings in the light of their well doings, and by so doing we can fight a good fight of faith.

We lose a mighty arsenal should we ignore the lives of the fathers. I know from reading their writings and reading about how they lived that there's a whole lot to be benefited from them. There's a saying that goes, "we all say that our mothers' soup is the sweetest until we go elsewhere and taste something sweeter." This is to say that if we have only tasted our mothers' soup, we don't have anything else with which to compare it, so it is the best as far as we are concerned. This is also true about our Christian life. We would be satisfied with the nonsense our souls are fed with today if we don't go back in history to see the sumptuous meal with which church leaders of old fed the souls of their congregations. We would be okay with the lack of commitment we see in many leaders. We would not see many inadequacies in our personal lives. So far we only experience, teachings, gatherings, and sermons of the present time, we won't see what manner of profitless junk so many are feeding our souls with, what manner of laziness characterises church leadership today, how cold our love is, and how ineffective our zeal. But when we look back and see the manner of life these fathers lived, we are going to see things differently, whether it be about our personal life or our gatherings. When we look at the grace of God in their lives, we would fall on our knees before God in earnest effectual prayer that is sure to spark revival in us. When we look back at them, we borrow a fire with which we could light our own candles. Let us not rob ourselves of this benefit.

There are many wrong practices today in the church that shouldn't have been if we had been living in consonance with the Fathers. Had we known

the ways of the fathers and see how it so much aligns with scriptures, we would have easily spotted a whole lot of wrongs in our ways. Wrongs that are sure to make God distance himself from us.

James 5:10 says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering, and of patience." Here is a call to remember ancient times. We should not have received such a call if there were no tangible benefits to it. We must keep the fathers in view and know how they walked with God else deviating for the way of God would be easy.

In times of fear, when we have the knowledge of God's great deliverances of his saints, we can assure ourselves even in the most fearful times. Isaiah 51:9 says, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" We see Isaiah here calling upon God with reference to his deliverances in the ancient times. His confidence in God for the present challenge was founded in his knowledge of his mighty acts and deliverance in ancient times. We must therefore first of all know, and then always remember, the wonders of God and deliverances in the past lest we be overtaken with fear and dread. We see all through scriptures a call to remember days of old with special reference to those who walked with God or tried to.

So the knowledge of history is very important for the church of Christ. It should be actively taught. We should not just use sayings of old time Christians as excerpts in our teachings and sermons. We must have a system in place, either by Sunday School, weekly activities, or any suitable means to ensure that Christians are well acquainted with their history. Let them know thoroughly the lives of at least key figures in the Christian history from the apostles right down to the present time. If we know its benefit as I have tried to explain here, we would know that it's worth it.

Unity Of Saints Below With Saints Above

"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

(Revelation 22:8 - 9)

In the scripture quoted above, we see an angel saying to John that he is a fellowservant. He also says he of "thy brethren the prophets." Lastly he qualifies he's relationship with John by saying he's "of them which keep the sayings of this book." I can't say whether or not he's a glorified saint who once lived on earth, but he most likely has been an angel from the beginning of time. However, we can see the blessed unity we have with saints above. As many that keep the sayings of the word of God are united in one. Whether they're saints above or saints below. We all are one.

Another way I'd like to describe the fathers are "Saints Above." I got this term from one of Charles Wesley's hymn, who understanding the perfect unity that exist of the church of each and every time and era wrote in the hymns:

*"Glory to God, and praise and love
Be ever, ever given,
By saints below and saints above,
The church in earth and heaven."*

Saints below and saints above, how sublime. Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) also wrote,

"Dwellers all in time and space."

Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace."

By dwellers in time he meant all as many that have lived on the earth through history lane, both dead and alive. By dwellers in space he meant all those who live now. Just as men of old were very conscious of the unity and the bond that existed between we on earth and the fathers who have gone on ahead of us, we too must live with this full consciousness.

In the unity that Christ prayed for, he didn't intend it for just a particular people in a particular point in time. He prayed for his church to be united in every ramifications and in every period and era. He meant that John Wesley should be united with Peter as much as Spurgeon with Martin Luther and as much as we in this present time with Paul, James or Polykarp. We all should be united. Through his prayer we know that he didn't just mean that the church of the twenty first century should be united within our selves alone, but he wants his church of the twenty first century to be united with the church of the time of Tozer, Spurgeon, Wheatfield, Luther, down and down and down to the apostles. Not that the apostles had these doctrine and the next organize a council of elders and they make amendments to suit the time, and the generation after that do the same and so on. The unity that we have as saints in Christ is to be united one and all of all times and generations. No amendments, no improving on, no "de-proving", nothing but persistence in the right doctrine as handed down to us by the fathers. This is the true unity we ought to have and we ought to be conscious of. We must strive to be united chiefly with the apostles in all teachings and doctrines, practices, ordinances, and passion as well as to be united with others who were united with these chief fathers.

I am ashamed of how the church gladly pushes the practices of the church down the years and bite, spike, and mock any who attempts to resist this falling away from our ancient and godly traditions. The book of Proverbs says, "There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet

is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men." (Proverbs 30:11 - 14). This so true of our puffed up generation. But we must know that not considering the fathers in our Christian living is a mark of disregard for the noble servants of the Lord.

Apostle Paul did not see himself as one who should just do his own will, but despite all the confirmation of his call he still went to be acquainted with those who were apostles before him. "And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." (Galatians 2:2). Those were Paul's words. Look at the things that occurred at his conversion. First spoke with Christ one on one and was converted by Christ himself, second God confirmed his conversion to Ananias and sent him to pray for him to receive his sight, and the sudden transformation of his person from the persecutor of the church to the nourisher of the church. All these were evidences of God's calling but it was not enough for Paul. He could have just went his way and start preaching everywhere and only meet the apostles coincidentally on one journey or the other. But he said he went up by revelation. By this we understand that he did not just do this on his own but by revelation meaning that God must have spoken to him to do so. This goes to tell us further how much Christ desires the unity of his church. Paul went to tell them what his message to the Gentiles was about. When he said "them" he meant those at Jerusalem. He said he did this lest he should should or had run in vain. By this we understand that the approval of the apostles who were before him signifying unity, though he too was an apostle, was important to his ministry. We too must communicate unto such as were of reputation the gospel which we preach both to the unbelievers and to the saints as well. By reputation, I mean all that had truly served the Lord, John Wesley, Luther, Polykarp and the those alike. We see that these accept and are united with us in this gospel. Yes, I know that they all are long

gone to their rest, but we still have their words and the account of their lives to communicate to, to see if they agree with us in our endeavor. When we are thus united we make the Lord happy for this is the only way we can say "AMEN" to his prayers to the father for his church.

Though the pope was corrupt, it did not make Luther and other reformers to discard the fathers. They keep quoting and referring to Aurelius Augustine, Ambrose, and other fathers who's lives were worthy of their Christian calling to give more force to their assertions in their strive for the reformation. We should never think that we can achieve reformation and unity to the fullest extent without carefully considering they who had run this race before us. And I don't believe that there can be a Christian champion who is not well acquainted with the lives of the saints who have gone on before us. I just don't think so.

In unity we must be united with all the saints down the years lest we run in vain, that though we run we still end up where there shall be gnashing of teeth. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13:8). His body doesn't change, thus to be a part and member of his body, we must live in consonance with the fathers.

The Limits Of Our Unity With The "Fathers"

*"But I said unto their children in wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers... I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes and keep my judgments, and do them."
(Ezekiel 20:18-19)*

Now it doesn't mean that we should take everything we see in the fathers as authoritative and right for us to do. We are only to observe their obedience and right living. This we can only know when we compare their lives carefully to what is written. We should understand that it is God we should

seek to obey and so his word alone must be our guide.

In Ezekiel 20:18-19, above, we see God clearly telling the people of Israel not to walk in the ways of their fathers. Where the fathers walk against God's will, we must not follow them in their error but pray that we should not fall into the same error. But in the first place, any who does not live according to God's will is not fit to be called a Christian father.

To take just two example, one is the error of clerical priesthood and the other is infant baptism. Clement of Rome for example drew a parallel between bishops and deacons and priests and Levites of the Old Testament. This is a grossome error that has plagued the church since that time till now. For no where in scriptures do we see such parallel being drawn. We see a parallel clearly drawn between Christ and the High Priests (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14, 6:20), that is in function only, for Christ far supercedes them. But Clement of Rome (though some name him among the fathers) made such an error drawing a parallel where scriptures drew none. It is on this error that the extortive error that Christians are to pay tithes to church leaders is founded. In such an error we must not follow. We must reject any parallel drawn between church leaders and priests of the Old Testament.

I'll like to also point to the error of infant baptism. I don't think I've read of a Bishop as excellent in duty, labour, and thoroughness of wisdom as Aurelius Augustine, yet you could easily spot certain things that are not totally scriptural in his arguments. For example, he argues in favour of infant baptism, not that he can see clearly sufficient scriptures to back it up, but he argues on account of the fact that the bishops before him argued so. It was Tertulan that was the setter forth of infant baptism, and many bishops after him held this belief. They had many funny points by which they thought infant baptism was best, but their arguments were rather inadequate and superstitious, for they wanted the church to baptise infants on account of symphathy for young ones who die before they could reach the age of accountability. Cyprian argues, "If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards

they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason does he [an infant] approach more easily to receive the remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another.”

They of course wanted these young ones to go to Heaven too, so they feared for the fate of children on account of Jesus' words that goes, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now my question is this, if for fear of their fate they baptise these infants, thus making them to be born of water, who does the borning of the spirit? For being born of water is just a part of the process. Without being born of the Spirit they still cannot be saved. John in his first epistle explains this in 1 John 5 using these words, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only..." So we understand that we can't throw souls to God by forced baptism. The ultimate decision lies with the Father not with us. The Father must of necessity call him to Christ by whom we are born of the Spirit. Baptism is not sufficient to save a soul. Until a man hears the call of God drawing him to Christ and he responds positive to that call shall he be saved. So their action by no means averts what they feared. But they made it a church practice and it was vehemently maintained as a cardinal belief of the church simply on the basis of pity. Too bad.

Their errors doesn't make their salvation ungenune. Even Paul had to rebuke Peter once (Galatians 2:11). For in as much as we are in the flesh, we are cannot perfect in any way. We may consider these errors grave but they're minute things compared to the errors we have today. We therefore have a lot to learn and benefit from saints of old especially when it comes to matters of Church administration. A lot of arguments, reasoning, decisions, amendments, etc were done especially during the times of the great ecumenical councils. These things would come in very handy to

every born again believer. I especially encourage every Christian to actively read these things and other ancient writings of Christians as we expect a revival and with every revival comes reformation. Their wisdom would help a great deal in making decisions about Church administration and government. But in it all, who is seek to obey is God and not men.

We must be therefore careful when reading about the fathers or their writings. We must be careful enough to be able to spot their errors and avoid them. As always, nothing makes a better Christian than the Bible. So we must never spend time reading their writings or about their lives at the expense of our Bible.

Conclusion

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."
(Deuteronomy 32:7)

We've taken a look at who are the fathers and seen that it is not a sin to call people fathers. We've seen that "father" is used in our everyday life and also the senses in which it was used in scriptures. We also seen who we refer to as Christian fathers.

It is important to unite with the fathers. We mustn't run the race ignoring those who have run the race before us. Paul by revelation from God did not ignore the apostles before him. We must try to make our ways to be inline with their ways so far their ways pleased the Lord.

History is very important. We can learn from the mistakes of the fathers so as to avoid making those mistakes ourselves. We must also learn from their well doing and allow it spur us on to greatness. If only we have good

understanding of our history, we would be able to rebuff oppositions against the faith more easily. Even arguments as petty as that which claims that Christianity is not a religion is sweeping many people off their feet, whereas these things have been well dealt with by the saints of bygone years.

We must always understand that there is a limit to the extent we are to follow the fathers. We must always keep in mind that who we seek to follow is God. We only follow the fathers in the ways that it helps us to follow God better.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, it is obvious that the church today have neglected the ways, life, and doctrines of the fathers and wish to go on without giving careful need to their ways. I see that it is not your desire that we ignore saints who have ran this race before us. Help us to live our own lives to be in unity with all those who have worked in your ways down history lane. As we do this dear Lord, let us be spurred into a life of deeper commitment in service, stronger zeal, fervent love, and purer lives. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

BE WARY OF THE CONCISION

*"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."
(Philippians 3:2)*

Now, this is a very important aspect of the endeavours of the Christian brotherhood. It is very important to keep our guard against concision. Now what is concision? Concision is cutting off; a division; breaking that which is whole into smaller bits; a schism or faction. These are what concision means. And the Bible tells us to be ware of it.

Now, why is this truth so hidden in our midst. Why do so few people know that we have such commandment in the Bible? It is because of our modern day Bible translations. I have often written and spoken against these translation and many other writers have done the same but people can't just understand that these translations were either published by the Devil himself or his children. They are so subtle and you think that they truly desire to present the truth of the Bible in a simpler contemporary English, but they cover a lot of truth and confuse a lot of things that were otherwise simple. I can assure you that around the very bottom of church division you'd find the multiplicity of Bible translations.

Take for example this issue of concision, the way Bible translations puts it is what is responsible for why we fold our hands while men divide the church further and further into smaller bits. But let us look at the way different translations puts it.

The Message Bible

“Steer clear of the barking dogs, those religious busybodies, all bark and no bite. All they're interested in is appearances — knife-happy

circumcisers, I call them.” (Philipians 3:2)

The New International Version

“Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.” (Philipians 3:2)

The New Living Translation

“Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.” (Philipians 3:2)

Please note here the fancy expressions by which they entertain the modern Christian so as to hide the truth from him. But the King James Bible puts it, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." (Philippians 3:2) You can see how the whole caution given to us about concision in the Bible is craftily buried and covered with fancy modern expressions. This conspiracy, as I clearly see it is, was carved out so that men who are founders of churches don't look evil at first site. Had the Christian brotherhood been more aware of this warning, many church founders today would have made zero success. The moment you tell the lie (as they love to say) that, "God is leading me to start my own church..." everyone could reject them easily siting this verse that it were impossible for God to lead a man to divide his church into bits and pieces. But seeing they have successfully buried it, church founders have had huge success in exploiting the church.

I won't delve further into trying to present to reasons why these translations have elements that are destructive to our faith and unity, but I'll just emphasise here and now that if the church must be united, we must do away with all our modern day Bible translations and stick to the King James Bible alone.

Now, many who divide the church by starting their own churches often

claim that they're taking a cue from the Christian stalwart, Martin Luther, as well as from other reformers. But do they not fool themselves in these? You see Martin Luther did not claim that God was leading him to start a Protestant church, in fact, he didn't have the mind of being a church founder at all, and he was no founder at all. He fervently did his master's will and the adversary gave him that name which was more or less a derogatory name.

Just listen to how the name, Protestant, came about. I got the account below from my dictionary:

Protestants are so called after the declaration (protestatio) of Martin Luther and his supporters dissenting from the decision of the Diet of Spires (1529), which reaffirmed the edict of the Diet of Worms against the Reformation.

So you can see that this name was given to them (most probably by the adversary) at that time because they protested against the edict of the diet that condemned their true teaching as heresy. So they called them the protesting ones. Note that he didn't have his movement called Lutheran, but used the name protestant in his writings to address to himself and his followers.

Many other reformers were called derogatory names. The followers of John Wycliffe were called Lollards meaning mumblers. But they, rather than choose to denounce name, chose to embrace it and be called by it, choosing to bear the shame of of the cross. If they had the mind of starting their own churches, they could have gone by fine, fancy, and enviable names as we have modern day church founders name their churches. They could have had, Redeemed, Dunamis, Winners, etc. But in doing the will of God their adversary named them derogatorily, they chose to accept it, and those very bad names because of the beauty of their service to God, have become glorious. Hallelujah!

All people read about Martin Luther is that he broke away from the church of Rome, but they don't seek to know that he was expelled by those he preached against, and people don't also know the things he did in trying to correct the errors he perceived before the open debates which later resulted in his excommunication. He had gone from place to place to inform people privately about the errors he perceived to be in the church, he didn't just get up for open debates and breaking away. His aim was never to break away. When John Wesley perceived the errors in the doctrines of the church of his time and the same day he preached against it in a sermon on salvation by the grace of God alone without works, he was walked out of the church and was denied his preaching privileges.

Whenever the reformers got excommunicated, they still continued in the pursuit for the needed change in the church. So, when we perceive errors, let us remain in the church and not depart. And when driven away (if you get driven away), we must continue to speak the truth shouting it on the roof tops. We can see this in Luther and other Reformers. They didn't just go to their own corner and start fellowshiping, rather they kept the debate up, they kept the resistance up, they won as we all know that over time the world has began to realise the true church and to put the Roman Catholic church where it belongs though in foolishness many still go back to that Babylon of a church. Sometimes not to the church but to their teachings and practices. Continued resistance against falsehood is the cue to take from the reformers.

Romans 16:17-18 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Though many churches have fine names, God can not lead people to divide the church. Such people don't serve God as Paul says above, they serve their own bellies. Don't let the fancy Christian-ish names they give their conspiracy deceive you.

Unity In Purity

So we must be ware of the concision. All founders who chose to found a church or the other were either sincerely wrong or craftily evil. We must know that all who embark on this act of concision don't serve God but seek to kill and destroy (whether knowingly or unknowingly) his church. Let us be ware.

Prayer: *Dear Lord and Father, please help us from today to be wary about the concision. Help us not to be deceived by people who serve their own bellies pretending they were serving you. Help us to identify to be what they are and to treat them accordingly. This I ask in Jesus' dear name. Amen.*

UNITING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:"

(Revelation 2:2)

This is a truth very hard to present to members of the body of Christ as they have made dear idols of false teachers. You can't talk against these false teachers without these people would come attacking you like verbal bandits. However we must speak the truth.

Some also think that speaking or acting against false teachers would result in disturbing the peace of the church. I have talked about this when I talked about the unity of the mortuary and that applies here too. There's a peace we have that is just because people are dead. You can't be peaceful in fire. The moment you're peaceful and still in the fire, it is because you're dead. Let us not think that this peace by refusing to challenge heresy is the desire of Christ for his church. Jesus has his peace which he offers us saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27). To opt for peace by tolerating false teachers is trading his peace for this peace of the mortuary.

Some would think that contending with false teachers would give the church a bad image in the eyes of the unbelievers, but the the truth is it is when we fail to contend against false teachers that the faith looks bad. Jesus contended with the Pharisees not caring what the Romans would think, we too ought to contend with false teachers, even publicly, not minding what unbelievers would say. When false teachers begin to preach their extortive messages, the unbelievers already start thinking, "what sort

of a God do these people serve?" If in such cases no one rises to prove these people wrong that our God is not the way they present it, the unbelievers would conclude that this is indeed the sort of God we serve. But when we contend with false teachers proving from the Bible the correctness of our assertions, we save the faith from mockery. So it is in contending that we save the faith from the bad image that false teachers are bringing to it.

Jesus Christ himself contended with all the Jewish religious powers of his time, not minding the fact that the Romans were there to observe these things. He didn't fear that the Jewish faith could be mocked by his actions but he openly taught the people the true way of God. In the end God was glorified by means of his contention. Let us be clear on this. Contending with false teachers does not give the church a bad image in the eyes of unbelievers, rather it redeems it from mockery.

Some also think that if any told lies in the name of God, he is going to strike them dead the way he struck Uzzah. And if God doesn't do that it is because they're approved of God. But you see, God doesn't work that way. He wants you to share in his glory and be a partaker in his eternal plan and accomplishment. That is why he gave you the word which is the sword of the spirit by which you could execute judgments on liars. God is not going to strike anybody dead while the sword of the spirit is in your hand. You must consistently look into the word and compare it with what preachers and teachers are teaching, the moment you discover they're liars, don't wait for God to strike them like Uzzah. Pick up your sword and slay. It is not in vain that you have been given the sword of the spirit. The purpose of the sword of the spirit is defeated if it be kept from slaying.

Hear Jesus boast about the church of Ephesus in the verse above (Revelation 2:2). One of the things that made Jesus to be proud of them here is that they tried those who falsely say they are apostles and they found them to be liars. Jesus was proud of them for this, but can he be proud of his church today? I trow not. We accept just anybody who claims

to be a pastor without testing them. Liars are preaching everywhere and exploiting people, yet we can't find them to be liars. We tolerate them and accept them. I believe Jesus is ashamed of us.

If Jesus was proud of the Ephesian church for the reason that they found out false apostles to be liars, then we must know that this peace we are trying to maintain is not the kind of peace he wants for us. He wants us to stand up to heresies and lies. We must test the spirit. Let us not in the name of this false peace tolerate liars to occupy leadership posts in the church. A.W. Tozer, who understood the harm of tolerating liars in ecclesiastical positions, said, "Let us not for the sake of peace keep still while men without spiritual insight dictate the diet upon which God's children shall feed."

If the church must be united, then we must risk losing this false peace and unite against false teachers. They are the key divisive factor in our midsts. I don't know how it is where you (the reader) are, but here in Nigeria, you see churches everywhere. In every street you see series of churches. They rent offices spaces in plazas to hold church services. In one plaza you'd see a number of churches. People hold church services in their living room. Now all these churches have pastors who make their illegitimate living from these churches. If you say all of a sudden, "we want a united church. No need for many churches, let all churches be closed down and let us have one assembly." Do you not see how many pastors whose illegitimate livelihood you'd taking away from them. It is for the sake of this livelihood that they would by all means keep the church divided. So the long lasting division we have seen in the church of today is not natural, but it was created by men and sustained by men for gain. If the church must be united, we must unite against these men.

2 John 1:9-11 says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God

speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." The apostles did not care for the peace we think we are losing if we resist false teachers. Apostle John here informs us saying that if anybody does not abide in the doctrine of Christ (keeping in mind that all who abides in this one doctrine is united in one), he said we should not receive such a person nor wish him God speed. He also says that if we do, we are partakers of his evil deeds. By extention, anyone who, for the sake of peace, decides not to resist these false teachers is a partaker of their evil deeds. Let us not be a partaker of the evil deeds of the concision and resist them pationately.

To resist this preachers is very simple. One day when I was a boy, I was at school one morning when two female teachers started fighting over a fried chicken. Even I as a little boy was shocked at the sight. They didn't quite care whether we were looking or not and didn't seem to be the least embarrassed. The Vice Principal however felt disappointed with the two teachers. She didn't bother chiding with the teachers but walked right up to them in anger, took the chicken from them, and went to her office. The fight ceased without any further word from the fighting parties. Same way, take the hope of earning from false teachers and the division in the church would cease without any further word.

How can this be done? The truth does not support the extortion and exploitation by which they make their money. So we ought to know how the truth negates their schemes and use it against them. We ought to dissect their argument and point out its errors to the gullible who could easily fall prey to their divices. We need to refute them at any level that they air their errors. It is true that Jesus says, when you have something against your brother, you should call him and tell him between you and himself alone. For this reason some may think that when one observes false teachers airing their errors, we should not rebuke them openly until we have spoken with them one on one. But you must understand that Jesus spake about personal issues and not doctrinal issues. If they came to you and teach you heresy, good, rebuke them personally. But if they come publicly to air their

errors, you must refute them publicly wherever you have a voice. If they do it on the social media, refute it on the social media, if they air it in their publications, refute it in your own writings. If they do it in an interview or whatever over the tele, you too must do so when you have an audience.

When Paul saw Peter disembling, he didn't bother rebuking him in private, but he rebuked him before all in whose presence he dissembled. When talking about how he rebuked Peter, he used this words, "I said unto Peter before them all..." (Galatians 2:14). Don't let them use the position they usurp as a shield. Even the false teachers in the Ephesian church claimed to be apostles, they didn't regard their claim to apostleship but still refuted them as the liars that they are. If Peter was considered the head of the church and Paul rebuked him, then what can this people claim that they should not be rebuked. If any among them is truly genuine and probably only went astray or was overtaken in a fault, they'd repent and appreciate your rebuke. This are the wise like David who said, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities." (Psalm 141:5). But the hypocrite and the liar will bite and fight. But in the power of God, you shall must prevail.

You too must stop funding them. When they see that there's no hope for money in their illegitimate enterprise, they'd go find something else to do. Many of these people came into the preaching ministry being perplexed about how to make ends meet and not in the love of God or love for his church. So far we keep alive the hopes of making money in preaching, we shall continue to draw hypocrites to ourselves. But once we stop funding such people, refute their heresies to ensure that others understand their errors and don't also spend their money on them, sincere people would occupy our leadership posts.

1 Timothy 6:5 says, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself." When we see any preacher that talk as if gain is godliness, we

ought to withdraw ourselves from them. This means they ought not to have our support, funding, etc. If we all do these, they shall naturally fail in their extortive schemes. We also see from this verse that contrary to what these people present themselves as, they are men of corrupt minds. People who preach prosperity all are men of corrupt minds.

This poison of getting reward from Christian ministry spoils leadership and in fact every Christian service. This is a very dangerous thing to happen. Micah 3:11, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." When leadership goes bad, God can leave the church without anyone having the slightest idea that he's left. This, I think, is the case of the church of today.

That we may understand fully the ways God demands of us to give, I wrote an article on my blog (<http://blog.ayomikun.com.ng>) titled "CHRISTIAN GIVING." I wrote it so that we may be informed about what God commands us about giving. I have also begun putting my thoughts together in the bid to write a book on everything about church and ministerial funding. Please watch out for it. So all we must do all we can that people are well informed about what God demands of them so that they won't be exploited.

So we must understand that the Christian faith is not in any way against us speaking against heresies, even when preached by authorities. Any one who's in the truth and in right standing with God is the real authority. And they do right to rebuke anybody, no matter who he is that preaches heresy. If we shall unite against false teachers, we shall see that the church very naturally will begin to unite.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, it is true that you were proud of the Ephesian church for finding and proving false apostles to be liars. Help us not deceive ourselves in vain honour of people who don't honour you. Help us to stand*

close together in unity against all evil teachers and drive them out of your holy church. This I pray in your wondrous name. Amen

RESISTING THE TRADITIONS OF MEN

*"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."
(1 Peter 1:18 - 19)*

This is also in line with uniting against false teachers because it is with traditions of men that they subvert churches. However, it is important that I lay special emphasis on this.

The whole Bible is against the traditions of man since the fall. Many people often say that there are traditions that agree with God's word, but I strongly doubt. They'd often point to the fact that traditions often emphasise on respect for elders, however true this is, usually the method is different from God's method.

In reference to traditions and respect for elders, most traditions take it to another level that you must not resist an elder. But Jesus was about 33 years of age when he left this earth. However he resisted Pharisees who were most likely far more advanced in years than he was. When he drove people out of the temple with whips, there were probably people far older than he was there. But to do his father's such tradition of respect for elders was contrary to his actions. So, while on face level, some traditions may seem to concur with God's word, yet I strongly doubt that they ever do completely. Even if they do completely, such traditions are very few. So few that we should strongly doubt that it is possible that the traditions of men to be in agreement with the ways of God.

The only times when we can have the traditions of men come close to the

ways of God are traditions in which the people had some time in history been in encounter with people who held God's revelation and mystery. Olaudah Equiano, an African slave, said that when he read the Bible for the first time, he was shocked at how much the mosaic law was in agreement with the prevalent African tradition around him. This he argued that probably, it was because Africans had descended from Abraham. So his tradition was very close to the will of God expressed in the Mosaic Law because some time in the past, they were connected to Abraham the friend of God. So such a tradition cannot be called traditions of men but the ways of God for they descended from him.

The ways of man since the fall has always been against God. This should inform us that we ought to be wary of traditions that come out of our own notions. We must always compare these traditions with the Bible. Else we would be doing what we merely perceive is good and convenient (for convenience is what usually informs human traditions that are perceived as good), we err. There is no age that is free from the tendency of drifting away from God to the ways of man, and sadly these drifting is often effected by the leadership. Not that individuals don't drift. They do. But it is the drifting of leaders that is most disastrous. It is the role of Christian leaders to ensure that the church maintains a right standing with God. If individuals drift away, they should lend out a helping hand to bring them back.

Martin Luther decried the replacement of the ways of God with the traditions of men in the church of his time when he wrote, "cruelly do the laws of men rave in the Church of God! And we unconcernedly profit by this superstition of the people, nay, by this tyranny of ours, caring nothing that the commandments of God are taken in jest, so long as men tremble and turn pale at our laws." There is no age that is free from this tendency, but there are times when these tendencies were properly handled. If we would be wise and stick to our Bibles, reading it and understanding, and having the will to obey it as individuals and as a church, we too shall handle ours in a good way.

When evil men creep in unawares into our midst to establish their own traditions and push aside the ways of God, we must resist that tradition. It may seem good, but we must still resist it. Many traditions of the church of today, such as seed offering, tithes, first fruits, and others that you can mention yourself are mere traditions of men. They claim to have scriptures in defence of these doctrines, but I can assure you that the scriptures they hold in their defence are always wrongly used and wrongly interpreted. For these things were not handed to the church by Christ but were introduced by greedy extortioners. Pastors claim that receiving money for preaching helps the gospel grow faster, and could go on and on to tell you of the benefits of being paid (hired) for service to God. These things look true and helpful, however, they must be resisted and done away with. Whether it originates from the leadership or from some other influential personality, they must be resisted. Only things that originates from scriptures (being properly interpreted by the Holy Ghost) must we retain and preserve.

Jesus told the Pharisees, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." (Mark 7:9). After pointing out the hypocrisy of the teachings of their traditions, Jesus went on to say, "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye." (Mark 7:13). There's no way our traditions can exist side by side with the ways of God. If we must keep his ways, we must let go of our traditions. If we must hold to our traditions, then we must make the word of God of none effect through our tradition. We have to sacrifice one for the other. Let us sacrifice our traditions to keep the ways of God.

So we must be very careful to be able to detect what constitutes the traditions of men and be careful to keep them out of our midst. Where there are persons who wish to maintain these, we must resist them with scriptures and not opinions.

As we have said, it is very highly improbable to hold to any tradition of

any origin and hold to the commandments of God simultaneously. Whether it be church denominational tradition, tradition of the place of ones nativity, or any other thing. To keep them, we must reject the commandments of God every now and then. Tradition is rightly said to be, in the words of A.W. Tozer, the dustbin of history. We must let go of and resist all human traditions if we must maintain true unity in purity.

Prayer: *Dear Father, I know what often constitutes what is good to us is just what is convenient for us. I see how almost impossible for a fallen people in a fallen world can have traditions that are in line with your ways. Teach us and strengthen us to resist every traditions of men that may spring up in our midst. This I ask in Jesus' dear name. Amen.*

BREAKING DENOMINATIONLA WALLS

"See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

(Jeremiah 1:10)

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)"

(2 Corinthians 10:4)

We had looked at the difference between the true universal unity as opposed to the profitlessness and deceivableness of interdenominationalism. So we must ensure that we break all the denominational walls that separate brother from brother. This is key to achieving unity.

I know some people preach that it is good to leave your churches when you observe the heresy by which the church system of that denomination is built. But I believe it is better to remain and resist the falsehood you find there to pull them down. They may drive you out but, just as I pointed out about what we can learn from the reformers, we must keep striving against the errors preached in those circles.

Now it is important to note that every strive for the truth in the church is an act of shelling the denominational walls of separation. This is because truth unites while denominational walls separates. Those who benefit of this separation would of necessity fight back, but you must keep shelling that wall till it crumbles. The Devil doesn't let go of his assets with ease. When Martin Luther stood for the truth resisting the papacy, it resulted in a 30 year war. So you must understand the nature of war you'd find yourself in

when you resist denominational separation.

We must not be deceived by what ever picture anyone wishes to paint that denominations is of little significance. We must maintain that if we are one, then we must exist as one. We must get rid of denominational sentiments keeping in mind that no denomination can save you but they can lead you to hell. If we must have an emotional or devotional fixation, it must be to Jesus alone.

Let us stand for the truth everywhere we find ourselves, and we shall see that denominational walls would naturally begin to crumble. If truly we must be united, we must consciously war against all denominational barriers, pull them down, render the very false unity of interdenominationalism useless, destroy every form of division, and hold to one another in love firmly planted on the truth of scriptures alone. Only then can we have the true unity Jesus desires for his church. For this reason, it is my desire, hope, prayer, and assured expectation, that all denominations would be destroyed and that the true church may come out of her (Revelations 18:4). As many as love Jesus must begin to pull down all divisive factors and begin to come out of her (that is out of their system of doctrine) and be united with the true church that has no denominational identity. The true church is that church whose identity is essentially this; the ground and pillar of truth. Don't just sit there and be a spectator, play an active role. Spread the truth.

Prayer: *Dearest Lord Jesus, the battle for our faith is one I admit is tough and strenuous one for the Devil won't let go of his assets with ease. Would fight hard to maintain his denominations. O Lord, give us strength, wisdom, power, courage, and might to war against him and his devices so that we may prevail gallantly and unite your church. This I ask in your dear name. Amen.*

HANDLING CONTROVERSY

*"And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths."
(Ezekiel 44:24)*

Now, there must needs arise controversy at every point in time. Sometimes controversy arise from heretics in our midst. At other times, controversy arise from well meaning people with no knowledge. At yet other times, it arise from well meaning people with knowledge but little understanding about its application. I must assure us that even after we've done all to be united, we must still find controversy in our midst. For this reason, how to handle this controversy so as to maintain the unity of the body Christ is very important. For this reason, I shall, in this chapter, speak of different ways to handle controversy.

Recognising God's Own Judgment

*"...they shall judge it according to my judgments...."
(Ezekiel 44:24)*

First and foremost, in every matter, we must seek to understand God's own take about the matter. One of the problems we often have is how little we understand to what extent God is willing to be involved in our decisions. We think he doesn't have a definite stance on most things. When I was yet unconverted, I used to think that God has little or nothing to do with us. He was just up there waiting for judgment day to punish the wicked and reward the just. But from the very moment I got converted, the first thing God did to me was to make me understand by his revelations that he is

very much involved in every part of my life and that he wishes to be a part of every decision I make. That changed my whole perspective about him and about life.

This level of his willingness to be involved in our affairs is visible in the Bible. There is almost nothing that the Bible does not take a definite stance on. So we must resort to the Bible in every matter of controversy. It may take a while to understand the stance of God in a matter, but we must keep resorting the Bible through the whole process until we have come to an agreement in the Bible.

Once we recognise God's stance on a matter agreement becomes easy amidst true brethren. Take for example, two children (siblings) have an argument about a phone. One says it is a phone, and the other says it is a camera. They both have their point. They could argue endlessly about this being that they both have their point, but once they take it to their father who has a better understanding on the matter and who they believe (though usually subconsciously) has the authority to decide on what is right and wrong, he can easily explain better to both party why it is both a phone and camera but primarily a phone.

The same way it is with God. Once we recognise his stance, being that we are convinced that he has the authority, being God, to tell us what is right and what is wrong, we must find our unity in him. This would also help us easily to resolve the issue of relativism. It is common today that people try to maintain division today on the grounds of relativism. This I call agreeable discord. A state in which people are so happily agreed not to be agreed. Though people would like to think they're united because they choose to ignore their differences on grounds of relativism, they remain divided still. This subtle form of division must not be ignored.

I once saw a picture on Facebook in which they showed to people looking at the number "6". One, standing on one side, said it was "6" and the other, on the other side, said it was "9". The claim was that depending on our

perspective, we can both be right though we have varying stance on the matter. This is very true, but the claim ought to be that we can both be wrong. Such views must not be held in the church. We must not be divided by perspectives or relativism. We must look at every matter from God's perspective. We can't just take any perspective we choose to have and decide on matters. If God is looking at the number "6" from the left, we must all be united in seeing the number from the left for that is the right perspective and vice versa. When all stand on the different points and looking at a matter on ground, having different perspectives, we are all wrong and not right (as the relativists try to argue in the photo). Wrong because we haven't given consideration to God's own perspective. Since God is one in everything, including in the Trinity, and not relative, the knowledge of his stance would help us in being united and not to be divided by varying perspectives.

What Is Doubtful Disputation?

*"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."
(Romans 14:1)*

Now most controversy arise around things that the Bible describes as doubtful disputation. Doubtful meaning matters that we cannot ascertain whether or not they are right. Everything done by Christians and the church must be things we are certain that are God's will as revealed in his word. Anything outside this is doubtful. And such we may say should be left to the opinions of each individual. It should not be binding on anyone to hold things that can't be ascertained. Giving everyone the leverage to hold his own opinion on things that are doubtful is key to avoiding controversy.

Now this is a risky thing to say because to what extent do we leave things

to the opinions of individuals? Some may even take it so far to mean that adultery and homosexuality should be left to opinion. That is not what I'm saying. We must be able to define to what extent that we allow each person hold his own individual opinion. I say therefore, we can only allow people hold their own personal opinion to the extent the Bible remains silent and no further. We must not leave just anything to opinion just because we wish to avoid controversy. Saying that it is wrong for a Christian to swear (whether in court or for any reason) is not disputable as the Bible is not silent about it (Matthew 5:34, James 5:12). Saying that people should speak in tongues in the church only when there is someone to interpret is not disputable. We can ascertain that the Bible says so (1 Corinthians 14). And I can assure you most confidently that the things that the Bible is silent about are few. As I've said before that God wishes to be very well involved in our decisions. For this reason the Bible being his word touches on every important point that influences are decisions and views.

The things we can leave to opinion are things such as family planning (how many children should one have), when to brush (after meals or before meals), when to sleep (early or late in the night), etc. The Bible has a stance on most other things. As a matter of fact, the Bible is not silent on when to drink water (before meal or after), for it is written, "Likewise also the cup after supper..." (Luke 22:20). This is during the last supper after they had eaten supper. Well, that (whether we should only drink after supper or not) should not be taken so seriously though. I say that on a lighter note.

However, we can come to the knowledge of the stance of the Bible by knowing the outright commands God has given us on such matters, the examples we have that are laid down in scriptures, and also (almost equally important) is test of expediency and reason. There are very little that can't be judged with certainty by this. For this reason, there's very little doubtful things to leave to individual opinion.

Following Laid Down Examples In Scriptures

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

(John 13:15)

In resolving controversy, we must have good consideration of the examples laid down in the Bible. Primarily, we must consider the life of Jesus seeing that he says, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Now this is not just limited to the act of washing each others feet, but we must understand that his whole life is an example for us to follow. We must unite in the pattern Christ has set for us.

I am only presenting this as a rule for handling controversy. I wrote somewhat into more details in my article titled, "THE IMPORTANCE OF EXAMPLES TO LEARNING." It can be found on my blog (<http://blog.ayomikun.com.ng>). For ease in finding the article just use the search box and type in the title. I recommend it to show how we ought to imitate Christ to the fullest extent.

So we must consider the example that Christ has laid down for us to follow. Upon the realisation of his example everyone must lay aside his opinion and unite upon the example he has laid down.

Another very important set of examples to follow is that of holy men. The life of the apostles, the prophets, and other holy people. They are also a pattern for us resolving controversy. Take for example, it is in ignoring the example laid down by Paul (in Acts 20:33-35) that many preachers today take Christian ministry as a source of profit making. This is as we already know is a major cause and sustainer of church division. If we must resolve our controversies effectively, we must never ignore the life of holy men. It is not just people we find in the pages of the Bible, for there are many holy men after the Bible was written. We mustn't ignore them too.

So living after the examples laid down for us is very important to unity. Even Jesus himself lives according to what he sees in the Father (John 5:19). This is why he is united with the Father and also with the Holy Spirit. If we find that Jesus himself has to live by what he sees the Father do to maintain unity, how much more should we live our own lives in thorough carefulness to ensure we follow laid down examples of Jesus and holy men who believed on him.

We can determine a lot with certainty of what is right or wrong by the examples laid down for us. For example whether Christian ministry should be seen as a profit making venture or not is not a disputable issue. There's no doubt for we find that by the example laid down by apostle Paul, Christian ministry is not a profit making venture. All other example laid down for us are means of ascertaining what is right or wrong, and therefore means of resolving controversy.

The Rule Of Reason And Expediency

*"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."
(1 Corinthians 10:23)*

To decide with certainty on matters that we don't have clear and direct instructions from the Bible, we must put them to a test of expediency and reason. The Bible may not have a clear commandment on every matter. In such cases we must take a decision on the matter that is both reasonable and expedient. It is very easy to judge if it is right or wrong to steal, right or wrong to lie, right or wrong to covet, etc. because we have clear commandments that prohibits these. "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," "Thou shalt not covet," etc. So we can easily judge these things. But what about matters of which we hear not "thou shalt not?" Do we leave it to opinions? No!

The man who can be able to judge rightly by reason and expediency must be very acquainted with the written Word to see beyond what is merely

written to understand the mind of God. He must understand God's goals, his will, his feelings etc. He must have the indwelling Spirit of God. For if he doesn't have such knowledge and understanding how shall he even know what is expedient.

Reason and expediency can only be determined in the knowledge of God's good, acceptable, and perfect will. To know these, Romans 12:2 tells, we must refuse to be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind. This is the means to be able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Without these, we cannot judge what is expedient and reasonable.

When a man who knows what is God's good, and acceptable, and perfect will prays, for example, "thy will be done in earth as in heaven," he knows what that will is because of his mind has been renewed. He therefore knows that anything that promotes the fulfilment of this will is expedient and reasonable. Such a person is spiritual and not carnal.

The apostles of our Lord for example, were spiritual men who knew God's good, acceptable, and perfect will, and were able to discern what is reasonable for them to do when the issue about daily ministration of food came up. Though they had no commandment that states, "thou shalt not serve tables..." yet they were able to decide wisely on the matter by following the rule of expediency and reason. For we read in Acts 6:2 where it says, "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason..." They knew they couldn't leave the assignment given them by Christ to serve food because they were spiritual and knew his will; "go and preach to all the world." Since serving food would hinder the accomplishment of that will, they knew it was not reasonable to do so. This rule guided them in everything. Even when they were threatened with persecution and even death, they still walked according to that which is reasonable and expedient according to the will of God they knew so well. So reason and expediency can only be judged in the knowledge and understanding of God's own will. With this rule of reason and expediency,

we could resolve a world of controversy without any doubtfulness. All of these different modes of judgment are all important as one can't be done effectively without the other. There are even things (in certain occasions) that seem as though we have a clear instruction, but it too must be put to the test of reason and expediency.

So, when we have the direct command of the Bible about right and wrong, we ought to follow to the uttermost. But because the Bible may not talk about everything, it therefore leaves room for some other mode of judgment. In such cases we have the example laid down for us by Christ and holy men to follow. This would help ascertain a world of other things which we couldn't ascertain by taking heed to the direct command of the Bible. And after this we have the rule of reason and expediency. I can assure you that if we follow these rules and different modes of judgment, we shall have almost nothing that we cannot ascertain with utmost confidence and certainty. The only thing we would then be left with would be decisions such as to whether or not your fridge should be grey or white etc. For this reason, when Paul says in Romans 14:1, "Him that is weak in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation" he was by no means saying that we should allow people to have their own opinion on just anything they wish to have it. It is only things that we can not ascertain by the rules above that we can consider as doubtful disputation.

Allowing The Weak To Grow In Strength

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye..."
(Romans 14:1)

Now that we have seen what constitutes disputable matters, we shall now look at how to allow the weak to grow. For when Paul says in Romans 14:1, "Him that is weak in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputation" he meant that we should tolerate the weakness of the weak. By extention, he meant we should be patient with them while they grow in knowledge as

we can see in the rest of the chapter. But it is good that we always keep these things in mind when considering those we may consider as weak in the faith because, if we don't understand the limits of what constitutes disputable matters we may as well receive thieves and wolves to the church.

Dealing well with the weak in conscience is also very important in resolving controversy as the weak are a very important and honourable part of the body of Christ. The weak must not be neglected or despised for we are told 1 Corinthians 12 that the body is done in such a way that it is on those parts we think are less honourable we bestow abundant honour. So since such are described with the word weak which can be considered demeaning, we must bestow abundant honour on such.

Now who are the weak in conscience. We can easily see from Paul's example about food and days of the week that they are those who haven't come to maturity in the knowledge of the freedom we have in Christ. This freedom is freedom from the bondage of the world and not freedom from the institutions of the Bible. Some as Paul says think that there are moral implications to the food they choose to eat or the day they choose to worship. But these things, in the freedom we have in Christ does not commend us to God, and failure to recognise does not de-recommend us to God either. But the weak still think that these things matter.

It is very important to know that the weak we are talking here are those who have this state of mind and act accordingly because of their pursuit for piety and not lawlessness. They hold to such things in fear not to offend God. For very Paul says weak "in the faith," not unbelievers. Such people honour God and don't wish to do that which God shall frown at (Romans 14:6). This is a very key characteristic of anyone we should consider weak IN THE FAITH. It is such that we are to receive, be patient with until they come to a more proper understanding, and it such that we should also honour and not despise.

Now how do we differentiate the people of weak conscience from heretics? First we had said that the weak hold his views in the bid to be pious. He acts the way he does because he's afraid to offend God. That is the first to know. But the heretic holds his views because he's rebellious, unspiritual, unregenerated, selfish, and what have you. This is a major difference.

Now to understand these things better, it would be important to take a look at the type of conscience we can have. We have the weak conscience which we're talking about now (1 Corinthians 8:7), the strong conscience (1 Corinthians 8:10), and the defiled conscience (Titus 1:15). The Bible does not use the term strong conscience, but I use it here for easy explanation. Since the Bible calls those lacking knowledge to be of weak conscience, I suppose it is write to refer to those having knowledge as those with strong conscience. Both the weak and the strong are both acceptable with God and we should receive people with such conscience. But those with defiled conscience must be rejected and refused.

The conscience is what one has come to build by his upbringing and such is hard to do away with. The society, family, culture, etc. in which a man grows in is what shapes his conscience. There are many things people hold to without any reason backing it up, but they hold it conscientiously because of the society, family, etc., they grew in. In this case of having weak conscience, some people may have grown in societies that considers eating of flesh an offence to their preconversion diety. And so they have seen it as morally bad to eat flesh. Their conscience has now been moulded to make them feel guilty when they act contrary to this not knowing the liberty they have in Christ. For this reason they eat only vegetables. Even in the knowledge of the liberty they have, they may still find it difficult to do away with such belief. They therefore, in the fear of not offending God refuse to eat flesh. Such conscience that is affected by things outside the premises of the Bible is what makes a weak conscience. People with such conscience are the weak we should accept. We should be patient with them as they grow into the liberty of Christ.

Unity In Purity

I shall speak of strong conscience later so I'll skip to talk briefly on the defiled conscience in order to differentiate heretics from the weak in conscience. Heretics on the other hand have a defiled conscience. They disregard God and his institutions. They don't pursue piety. They just wish to have their own way and not God's way. Such we are not to accept nor receive, but rebuke and reject (Titus 3:10). For this reason, when we see people preaching contrary to what is written, or formulating their own doctrines to have their own way, or fornicators and adulterers, or cultists, etc., we must understand that these are not weak, they are heretics and must be treated accordingly. Paul is not by any means asking us to receive such.

Now, why is patience with the weak important? Conviction before obedience is necessary to maintain a lively conscience. Where one is not convinced before obeying, he isn't obeying God but men (that is those who influence him to do as he's doing). This is not acceptable with God. So we must leave such people to first be convinced before doing what we see as right according to the freedom we have in Christ. It may take time but our patience with them would be key to their healthy growth. Should we force them to act against their conscience, we shall end up making them have a defiled conscience. 1 Corinthians 8:7 says, "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled." So if you in your knowledge persuade these to act against their conscience being weak (in Paul is to eat what has been sacrificed to an idol), their conscience becomes defiled. To avoid this, we must be patient and not push them to jump into enjoying the liberty we have in Christ. Let them grow into this conviction of liberty before they start living according to it to avoid defiling their conscience.

But when people prefer to live in ignorance and are stubborn in accepting the truth, we must reject. They are not one of us but do lie. Such people shall stir up endless strife and controversy if not well and decisively dealt with. They must be rejected to maintain our unity. On the hand the weak

IN THE FAITH must be received else we're not united indeed. They are an essential part of us. We mustn't wrestle with them but they must have our approval and we must receive such with wide open arms.

What Does It Mean To Be Strong

*"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs."
(Romans 14:2)*

What it means to be strong is not what some think it is. I sometimes hear people talk about the strong to seem to mean people with less sensitive conscience. They think that what the Bible is saying is that people who don't eat food given to idols do so because their conscience is very sensitive. So because of this wrong thinking they conclude that a person who's conscience is not sensitive is a person with a strong conscience. They think the ability to sin and go against God's word without feeling guilty is what it means to be strong. Yeah it is a strong conscience for it is so strongly dead.

For this reason they even think that women who choose to cover their hairs while praying, people who refuse to swear, etc. all have weak conscience, while those who do otherwise, being contrary to scriptures, are those who are strong. But what the Bible says about those with weak conscience is that they lack knowledge not that their conscience is over sensitive. Therefore those who have strong conscience are those with knowledge. Both they who have weak conscience and those who have strong conscience both have sensitive conscience. Anyone who doesn't have a sensitive conscience has a dead conscience, for deadness is lack of sensitivity. Such is by no means a Christian.

Being strong is having a fuller understanding of God's word and of the redemptive power of the sacrifice of Christ, and therefore being able to live

with this knowledge in full conviction of its goodness, though the external factors that moulded our conscience seems to be against such a freedom. The conscience of the strong remains sensitive, but the proper understanding of God's word makes him free yet fully obedient to God's word.

When we are looking into matters of controversy rising from the weak amidst us, we must be cautious in our understanding of the differences between people with weak, strong, defiled, and dead consciences. If we don't do this well, we shall end up welcoming scoundrels and devils into our assembly in the name of receiving the weak.

The Rule Of Circumspection

*"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."
(Ephesians 5:15)*

While I believe the rule of circumspection is more inclined to help in personal judgment, I also believe the rule of circumspection could also help in judging matters that we seem not to find a definite instructional answer to in the Bible. Circumspection simply means not willing taking risks. This will help us in taking helpful stand in every matter.

Following the rule of circumspection means staying clear off what one is not sure of. When we are not sure of what the will of God pertaining a matter, circumspection demands that you stay clear of the issue. It is not that way of thinking that says "well since the Bible is silent on the matter, I'll go ahead and do as I wish..." If for example someone is not sure if or not it is right in God's eyes for a man to ride in a car (just an example), he shouldn't say, "well, since the Bible is quiet about it, I'll do as I wish." Rather his judgment should be, "since I can't tell if or not it is good to ride in a car, and since I'm convinced that he's okay with man walking, I'd rather walk rather than ride in a car." This is circumspection.

Every Christian ought to live circumspectly and judge every matter with

circumspection. When we do this, it would be easier to agree on every matter that arises. Where we find people taking actions they doubt whether or not it is expedient, it would surely weaken our unity. I will not talk further than that here. I wrote quite extensively on matters of circumspection in my article titled, "PIETY, CIRCUMSPECTION, AND INNOCENCE - by the Word." It can be found on my blog, <http://blog.ayomikun.com.ng>. Just use the search bar to find the article.

The Council Of Elders

"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."

(Acts 15:1-2)

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."
(Acts 15:6)

As we can clearly see, one factor that shall always arise regardless of age, era, and time in history, is that of doctrinal differences based on disputable issues. This has always been so, as we can see in the text above, from the earliest church, and it will always be as we are assured in scriptures where it says, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Corinthians 11:19). So this must happen for our good. God allows it so as to streamline our leadership. The folly of many modern day professing Christians however is that nobody cares about checkmating heresies and so it does not streamline our leadership in any way. Rather they prefer to hold to the unity of the mortuary.

To make sure that heresy does not spread and so that it could streamline

our leadership, it is important that we keep watch for any strange doctrine or any other thing that seem to be a disputable issue, and if we, as individuals or as a church, discover any, we are to meet to discourse the issue prayerfully, and come to a conclusion based on scriptures. This is where the council of elders come in.

Elders of the concerned churches ought to meet and discourse the issue prayerfully, with careful application of scriptures to every point raised, and bringing everything under the different rules by which we can make right judgments (the rule of reason, expediency, circumspection, etc). Anything they conclude on the matter by this means is to be accepted. By saying concerned churches, I do not mean that their decision is to be accepted in those churches alone. But where they come to a conclusion, they should communicate everything in detail about the council to every other church, even globally. They are to explain how their conclusion is in both agreement to scriptures and reason, expediency, circumspection, etc. They can't just impose their conclusions on the church on the ground that they're elders. Should they do this, they must think that by being elders they have assumed the place of God. Only God can draw such conclusions for his church without their questioning, for this reason they must act proactively to give answers to every possible questions that may arise, and clear every doubt that may be stirred about their conclusion. When they have done this and it is obvious that their conclusion was reached by the leading of the Holy Ghost, other churches everywhere should accept and endorse it. All other churches should take a cue from what they observe and adopt it when they observe it is scriptural. If any church objects because they find a fault or they have a way of making their conclusion on the matter better, their objections should be given a proper hearing. Such communication should always be ongoing amidst our churches if we are to remain lively and pure in our unity. Remember, we all must be of one mind. We are one body. What affects the one affects the whole.

When the conclusions of elders have no scriptural backing so much that the men who claim to be elders only handled the issue based on popular idea

or for their personal benefit, interest, or profit, etc., let they who know the truth dispute it again bringing to bare where it contradicts scriptures. Let him or them not be afraid of the decision of the elders but oppose them with the scriptures. The church must also learn to be united in casting out of our midst false elders who give wrong interpretations to scriptures for they are not approved of God. Only those who are approved of God should lead us. Others should be thrown out to where they belong; outside the church. This way, only approved people shall lead us.

We don't have many elders now, and much of the people who claim to be elders are in no way elders. For this reason, as it should always be, absolute reliance on scriptures alone is what we need. We must all go back to our Bibles (i.e. King James Bible, if in English), and return to the basics. We just can't rely on much of the people who occupy the role of leadership now, for they are like a foot out of joint. The church of Nigeria has had a controversy over the tithe doctrine practiced in our churches and the issue has become so pronounce that even people in the secular sphere are commenting on the matter, yet these false teachers we have, like dumb dogs, have not yet seen the need to hold a council of elders. They don't care. They're just concerned about their money. The only ones who have responded have done so because they see their finances being threatened. Though few have come out to admit that asking Christians to pay tithes is a wrong doctrine, but none is calling for an ecumenical council to look into the matter.

However, in an ideal case, of which the Lord shall enable us to have soon, those who are truly elders ought to meet, discourse the issue, come to an agreement as the Holy Spirit leads them, and what they conclude through the Spirit of God shall all churches accept. The conclusion of the elders should be published to the view of everybody, even globally. In our days, this should include on websites, blogs, Facebook fan pages, twitter, magazines, and so on. This should be done so that all, like the Berean Christians, may be able to observe these things and search the scriptures to see if these things are so. This way, heresy shall not be given provision to

be a source of division, but to make manifest those who are approved. When the apostles held theirs, it didn't mark the beginning of a new church, probably with the name, "Pauline Christians Assembly." Rather, it made it clear that Paul and Barnabas were approved, it silenced heretics, it caused much holy joy, and the church remained united.

This is a major way disputable issues ought to be handled. In the recent past, disputable issues has been handled by breaking the church. With much joy people break the church for profit and not in pursuit of truth. But we've seen, here, that when disputable issues arise, never should it result in fragmenting the church. The council of elders, and continuous disputation and dialogue, insisting that the truth be maintained, are the means by which matters are to be resolved. If any man in the name of finding faults with doctrines or practices start his own church, he is a thief, he is of the Devil. Let us return to the practice of holding councils of elders in resolving issues.

I shall write more extensively about the council of elders in a book I've broken off from this. Here I just wish to tell us about how the ecumenical council of elders is a method of handling controversy. I shall speak in details about it in that book. It currently has the title, "CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP," but it may change. So look out for it.

Leaving Our Opinions Behind To Unite In The Word Of God

*"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."
(Philippians 2:3 - 4)*

At the bottom of the successful pursuit for unity in purity is to understand

the object of our unity and gravitate towards it. In this regard we have a lot from the universe to learn. Everything in the earth is one because the gravity pulls everything to one point, and the galaxy is in order because all the planetary bodies revolve around one point. The church too needs (and indeed has) a common point to gravitate towards, and a common point around which all we do revolves around. That which we must gravitate towards is God, and the force by which we are drawn towards him is his word. Every other thing pulls apart. Our opinion, our upbringing, the culture of our nativity, popular beliefs, etc. All these are forces by which we are pulled apart into a state of discord. Everything we do must revolve round God and that centripetal force is his word. This is how we can achieve unity. Every other thing pulls us out from that orderly revolution we make round our origin, by which means we descend into a state of disastrous confusion.

All these things that pulls apart must be abandoned by one and all if our controversies are to be effectively handled. All the things we learnt in our life's journey (including those that moulded our conscience) that we didn't take from scriptures must be left behind by one and all, and every one and all must unite in the word. We must agree in the word. Your opinion is not important where God's word exists. Don't even keep it to yourself. Just discard it.

à Kempis Thomas, in his great book titled, “The Imitation of Christ” says, “True it is that every man willingly followeth his own bent, and is the more inclined to those who agree with him. But if Christ is amongst us, then it is necessary that we sometimes yield up our own opinion for the sake of peace.” This is so true respecting our opinion. We must however never treat God's word and commandment as our opinion to give it up for peace to reign. We must fight the good fight of faith against anything that is opposed to God's will in our midst. But we must readily let go of our opinion for peace and unity to reign.

To hold tenaciously to our opinions, cultural values, etc. is to have a

misplaced value on things. These things are not valuable to us. All these must be discarded seeing we have the word of God to unite in. If we shall let go of our opinions and unite in the word of God, we shall not have need for handling controversy at all but shall be fully united. Should ever a controversy arise in this state, it shall not last long until we've effectively dealt with it.

Conclusion

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Colossians 3:15)

We have seen in this chapter the ways we ought to handle controversy. First by recognising God's own judgment and stance on the matters of controversy. That is the ultimate and every other way must be in the bid to recognise God's own judgment. whether it is following laid down examples laid down in scriptures, following the rule of reason and expediency, the rule of circumspection, etc. All these must be as we try to understand God's own judgment on the matter.

As a way of drawing the matter to a conclusion, I admit that while the church can be very perfectly united, it would be a bit too hopeful to expect 100% understanding amidst ourselves (seeing the limitations that abound in our flesh and human understanding). For this reason, I'd like to emphatically point out that no matter the ways we wish to handle controversy, concision is in no way, under any condition or circumstance at all, a method of resolving controversy. The ways I've presented here are the ways we see in scriptures on how to handle controversies that may arise. Any one who acts outside these or others we could see from scriptures, thereby breaking the church of Christ into bits is not resolving controversy, rather he's doing the work of the Devil. Thus says the Lord, "And in

controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments..." (Ezekiel 44:24). Anything outside his judgment is detrimental to the church.

I pray that God would help us deal with every controversy easily. May he grant us the grace to live our lives in ways that shall ensure our lively unity in purity in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *Dearest Lord Jesus, how gladdening it is to see that there's rarely anything that can arise up in our lives that we can't get direct instructions from your word. I'm so delighted that you're intimately involved in all our affairs. O may we never ignore such show of love but may we regard you in every decision we take including the ways we handle our controversies. Please give us wisdom and understanding not to ignore the laid down examples we have in you and your holy people in bygone years. Also help us to be able to judge wisely according to reason, expediency and circumspection. And where we are to leave matters to opinions, help us to be humble enough to respect every man's stands on such matters. This I ask in your dear name. Amen.*

THE NECESSITY OF DOGMAS TO UNITY & PURITY

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

(1 Corinthians 14:33)

"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you."

(1 Corinthians 11:2)

One of the things that are looked upon with contempt as a result of lack of knowledge is the word "dogma." Dogma is a good word that means Christian truths that can't be spoken against. These truths were considered cardinal to the faith of which no one can be a Christian without consenting to. The authority of the claim is the fact that it is the Bible. But when the Court of Rome gained primacy through treachery, the word began to lose its meaning because they began to shift authority away from the Bible to the Pope. Instead of the Bible dictating what is cardinal to the faith, the power was shifted to the Pope. Over time, dogma began to mean something people accept or teach without basis. This is because the Pope began to decree diverse corrupt doctrines out of his head and seeing that they have taught people to believe that the Pope had power to decree things that were binding on them, they were expected to accept it without questioning or reasoning. This how the word, "dogma," lost its good meaning. We need to restore it fast.

This is the same in many Christian circles where preachers are seen as such an authority who has the power to make decrees and based on his own authority (that is not backed up with scriptures) he can make it binding. This is always the case where Christians don't read the Bible for themselves to see the freedom they have and where true authority is.

Misplaced authority is where dogma got its bad connotation.

Funny enough, the people who like to discard anything they tag dogmas still have several "dogmas" they hold to except that they don't call it dogmas. The sadest part is people who are often throwing doctrines and practices overboard claiming they are dogmas are the ones who hold the most baseless dogmas if they could indeed be called dogmas.

By dogmas I refer to ordinances that every member of the body of Christ is expected to hold as true and seen as being of fundamental importance to the faith and consequently expected to obey. Ordinances are unifying factors that ensures orderliness. We are in need of such ordinances and dogmas today like never before. I will only talk briefly about it. I intend to write about it to a fuller extent in another book on Christian Leadership I'm already putting together. I'll just talk briefly on how it affects our unity. Other things shall be spoken about in details in that book God willing.

The elders of the Nicean Ecumenical Council said after the council held, "We Christians know what we believe: it is not a vague 'idea' without substance or outline: it can be put into form, and by it we 'test the spirits whether they be of God.'" This is so true. These outlines is what dogmas entails. We must be able to clearly define our stance and spell out what defines us. We must be able to have clear doctrines that all members of the brotherhood must hold to, else they're are not one of us. These must be defined without the influence of sentiments or vagueness of a shallow understanding of all things pertaining to God's will, Christian doctrine, life, and the complexity of human nature (both physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and all). We must get rid of all vagueness about the faith and let everything be clearly defined and spelt out. This is very important. Without it we can't be united.

We must clearly spell out what we believe and give force to it with the right interpretation of the Bible. The nations of the world understand the importance of spelling out what its citizens should live by and that is why

Unity In Purity

each country have their constitution. Each organisation has spelt out rules that govern it. The moment people come together into a common pursuit, purpose, goal, etc., the first thing they do is define rules that shall govern their union. By this rule they are united. By this rule they know who is for the team and who is against the team. By this rule they can purge themselves of bad eggs. By this they grow healthily. It is just the same way that ordinances and dogmas are key to our being united. It helps declare on what grounds we are united so that those who don't like it can go to where they like it and leave us alone. So it serves as a kind of sieve to bring only people who are like minded (having the mind of Christ) together in our fellowship. It helps our unity to be more conspicuous and present the beauty of God's peace better to the world.

1 Timothy 1:3, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." Paul here is emphasising the need of having one doctrine. The church had their doctrine and he was careful enough to post people to ensure that every member of the body of Christ in every place walk in the same doctrine and no other. The church of today must emulate the apostles so that everywhere round the world, we all have one doctrine. Once you get into a church, whether you travel or are at home, the rule is the same. If you fellowship away from home, you'd have to come out of the church to remember you've travelled.

As a conclusion, Philippians 3:16-17 says that, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." True unity is walking in the same rule. But how shall we walk in that rule without spelling it out? 1 Corinthians 1:10 also says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." This expresses to us the need for clear cut ordinances for the church. It is essential to have definite standards for all

the body of Christ. There should be no blurring of the battle line. He who is in is in and should be known to be in, and he who is out is out and should be known to be out. This can only be by means of spelt out dogmas and ordinances. May God help us to draw out right ordinances and grant us the grace to live by them in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, we see in your word that you want us to walk by the same rule and speak the same thing. Help us and grant us the grace to define rules that define us, and define our stand on every matter. Not with confused vagueness, but with absolute clarity to the unification of your church, and the glorification of your dear and majestic name. Amen.*

REPENTANCE

*"... but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
(Luke 13:5)*

When a heart that loves God realises its wrong doing, repentance is only natural. It is a heart that has no love for God that can still rejoice in the knowledge of sin. If the church must be united, repentance at every point we've erred is key. Repentance is not just acknowledging ones wrong doings, but changing of ones ways.

Why this is very important to unity is simple. When we realise that the path we're taking is contrary to God's will, it is our ability to both realise this and change accordingly that determines whether or not our predicaments can be remedied. This realisation and change is what is repentance. In our repentance and return to God we become united in him. But in refusal to repent we remain separated from him.

This is why God is ever willing to have us repent so that he can have us to himself again so far we are willing to truly repent. Nahum 1:3, says "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." God will not acquit the wicked. We must never justify ourselves, but confess and repent of our evil ways. We as a body must not excuse or justify evil. So far we keep excusing ourselves and/or justifying our evil ways, God shall not forgive for that is not repentance.

When the Bible says, " If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14), it is refering to repentance though people often think it is a call to prayer. This verse emphasises repentance far more

than it is a call to prayer. We should also through this understand how much better it is for us to repent than to be pouring out endless prayer thinking, that by it, we can force God to do what we want. Unity in purity can be achieved more by repentance than with prayer.

Prayer is good but listen to this, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." (Proverbs 15:8). It is the prayer of the upright, not that of the unrepentant that is his delight. It is the prayer of such that he hears not the prayer of the unrepentant. Proverbs 28:9 also says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

One of Isaac Watts's hymns goes:

*"If sin lay covered in my heart,
While prayer employed my tongue,
The Lord had shown me no regard,
Nor I His praises sung."*

This hymn was derived from the verse that goes, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psalm 66:18). Can we see how that repentance is more important and should precede prayer?

No matter how much we discover about our wrong doctrines and practices, if we don't repent, it amounts to nothing. In a church that has erred from the ways of God and has become so divided, only by repentance can we attain to that state of blessed unity in purity.

Finally my dear brethren, let us endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3). It may mean contention, let us do it gladly knowing that, if done without strife, it is the seed of concord. Amen.

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Prayer: *Dear Lord, if we must be united with you and be in unity with ourselves, we can only achieve this through repentance. Lord forgive us our sins and help us to return to you in sincere repentance and contrition. Please restore us back to a state of perfect unity in purity with you and with ourselves. As for the unrepentant that shall stand in the way of our pursuit for unity in purity, drive them away like chaff in the wind. This I ask in your dear name. Amen.*

Section 5

Conclusion

GOD'S ASSURANCE OF OUR UNITY

*"For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."
(Ezekiel 34:11)*

Now about the certainty as to whether or not our blessed unity in purity is sure, we have a sure guarantee in God's word. Whether men like it or not, the unity of the church will be effected by the power of no other than God himself.

It was easy to see God's promises as I wrote about the consequences of dividing the church in Chapter 4. As God speaks about what he shall do to those who resist his will and scatter his sheep we find him also promising that he'll both punish those who do so thereby putting an end to their divisive scheme and that he himself shall gather his sheep that has been scattered. For this reason, our unity is guaranteed. We can read about God's commitment to his sheep throughout the prophets. I wrote about it briefly (citing Ezekiel 34) in my article titled "EGYPTIAN CAPTIVITY." So we have nothing to fear. Our unity is guaranteed though the Devil through his hypocritical ministers wage war against our unity.

God says in Ezekiel 34:23 "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them..." Jeremiah 23:3-4 also reads, "And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD."

This should serve as a consoling factor to all of us who desire to have a church that is truly united in the purity of God's word. In my professional career, I have come to understand that any project that I have no guarantee

of its success is always tiring to advance. When I can't be sure that my hard work would yield any benefit for me, uncertainty makes it become really hard for me to work hard in pursuit of its execution. So also when we strive for the unity of the church in the purity of God's word, it seems very hard and so the pursuit of it can be very discouraging. But now that we see that God is himself personally, actively, and passionately with us in this pursuit, we can be sure that we shall succeed. So let us go forward in the strive for our common faith knowing fully well that we are more than conquerors.

Let us not also fold our hands that since God is actively involved we need not disturb ourselves. First, to fold your hands would be disobedience seeing we have a clear command that says, "...earnestly contend for the faith..." (Jude:3). So to fold your hands is disobedience and such comes with punishment from God. So save yourself by your active participation in the pursuit of attaining and maintaining unity in the church.

Secondly, it is shameful for a servant to fold his hands while the Master works. If throughly we are God's servants, let us run to do his service and not fold our hands for we are his servants. Let us do this earnestly and passionately. All a good servant needs to know before acting is his master's will and not necessarily his master's command. So, even without receiving the command to earnestly contend, we ought to earnestly contend for the unity of the church without anyone telling us, seeing it is his passionate will to have a united church.

Thirdly, God is glorified when he works through us to achieve great things. God delights to use us for his purpose. So we must make ourselves available for his use. In uniting his church and maintaining that unity, he says he would appoint a shepherd over them. If we don't make ourselves available, he shall not make use of us for his noble purpose. God is magnified in us when we, through the power we have in the Holy Ghost, do great things for him.

So the unity of the church of Christ ought to be earnestly pursued by as many as honour the Lord. We must do it passionately and not casually. The understanding that God is committed to this business of uniting his church should only lead to seek this unity more passionately and boldly, being confident of our victory.

So, let us not sit back saying let God do it. Rather, let us prayerfully seek the truth for ourselves, and act with complete boldness, striving for the unity of the church in the purity of the word of God, knowing that God himself is in our midst to accomplish this great unifying and purifying enterprise. As we do so, may God open our understanding to know the truth, stand for the truth, and cheer our hearts as we contend manfully for the unity in purity of the church of Christ.

Dearest brethren, as I draw this book to a conclusion, all I can say in summary and in the light of all that has been said in this book is; it is time to rise up to our duty. May God help us. Amen.

Prayer: *Dear Father and Lord, as I've seen in this book many things touching the unity in purity of your church, help us to rise up, both now and always, to our responsibility and fight cheerfully for the unity in purity of your church. Help us never to lose sight of you, our Champion in this cause. This I ask in Jesus' most glorious name. Amen.*